00066623

THE
ASIATIC SOCIETY OF BOMBAY
TOWN HALL, BOMBAY-1.

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 21 October, 2015

A

LITERARY HISTORY

OF THE

Middle Ages;

COMPREHENDING

AN ACCOUNT OF THE STATE OF LEARNING,

FROM THE

Close of the Reign of Augustus,

TO ITS

REVIVAL IN THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY.

66623 a.e.

BY THE

REV. JOSEPH BERINGTON.

London:
PRINTED FOR J. MAWMAN, 39, LUDGATE-STREET.

1814.

820·9
Ber/Lit
66623

CONTENTS.

BOOK I.

A VIEW OF THE DECLINE OF LITERATURE AND THE ARTS, FROM THE CLOSE OF THE REIGN OF AUGUSTUS, TO THE FALL OF THE WESTERN EMPIRE, IN 476.

A Sketch of the State of Letters in the Augustan Age—the Causes of their Rise briefly examined—First Period of their Decline—Second Period—Third Period—Decline of Eloquence—of Poetry—of History—of Philosophy, &c.—the State of the Libraries—Decline of the Polite Arts—the State of Literature in Italy and in the distant Provinces—the Causes of the Decline of Literature and the Arts—was Literature affected by the Establishment of Christianity—the State of Grecian Literature during the same Period.

	Page.
A Sketch of the State of Letters in the Augustan Age	1
The Causes of their Rise briefly examined	7
First Period of their Decline, A. C. 14—138, from Augustus to Adrian.	8
Second Period, An. 138—313, from Adrian to Constantine	10
Third Period, An. 313—476, from Constantine to the Fall of the Western Empire	13
The Decline of Eloquence	20
The Decline of Poetry	30

Page.
Rabanus Maurus 170
John Erigena 172
The Use of Theological Controversies 175
Alfred 177
Flattering Statement of Muratori 180
Ireland 182
The Tenth Century 184
A General View ..... ib.
The Monks not assiduously employed 189
The Reigns of the Othos 194
Literature of England 197
St. Dunstan 198
Gerbert, afterward Silvester II. 202

BOOK IV.

STATE OF LEARNING AND THE ARTS, IN THE ELEVENTH AND TWELFTH CENTURIES.

The Eleventh Century—the Roman Church: Leo IX.—the Norman Settlers in Italy—its Language affected by them—Gregory VII.—the Fictitious DONATION *of Constantine—no Change in the State of Learning—Peter Damianus—the Character of the Poets and Historians—Bologna and Salerno—State of France—the Normans: their Character—Lanfranc—Political State of England—the Norman Conquest—Ingulph, Abbot of Croyland—Anselm—Eadmer: his Credulity, and that of the Age—the Crusades—*TWELFTH CENTURY*—increased Intercourse with Rome: its Effects—New Monastic Orders—St. Bernard—Scholasticism introduced—Peter Abelard—Peter the Lombard—England—Oxford—Cambridge—English Historians—John of Salisbury—Peter de Blois—Architecture and other Arts.*

Page.
The Eleventh Century 217
The Roman Church 219
Leo IX. ..... ib.

Page.
The Norman Settlers in Italy 221
Its Language affected by them 222
Gregory VII. 224
The fictitious Donation of Constantine 225
No change in the State of Learning 228
Peter Damianus 230
The Character of the Poets and Historians 232
Bologna and Salerno 236
State of France 237
The Normans 238
Their Character ..... ib.
Lanfranc 240
Political State of England 242
The Norman Conquest 248
Ingulph, Abbot of Croyland 254
Anselm 258
Eadmer 263
His Credulity, and that of the Age ..... ib.
The Crusades 266
The Twelfth Century 269
Increased Intercourse with Rome 271
Its Effects ..... ib.
New Monastic Orders 276
St. Bernard 278
Scholasticism introduced 284
Peter Abeillard 286
Peter the Lombard 299
England 303
Oxford 305
Cambridge 307
English Historians 308
John of Salisbury 315
Peter de Blois 320
Architecture and other Arts 322

BOOK V.

STATE OF LEARNING IN THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY.

Thirteenth Century: Formation of Modern Languages—the ROMANE *or* ROMANCE *Language—Trouveurs and Troubadours—the State of other Countries—Italy—Conduct of the Roman Bishops—Universities—other Crusades—and other Monastic Institutions—Divines and Philosophers: Thomas Aquinas—St. Bonaventure—Albertus Magnus—Roger Bacon—Robert Grosteste—the various Fortunes of Aristotle—Historians—Italian—Matthew Paris—Poetry—Saxon and English Language—its Poetry—Latin Poetry—Introduction of Rhymes—Grammar and Rhetoric.*

	Page.
Thirteenth Century	333
Formation of Modern Languages	ib.
The Romane or Romance	337
Trouveurs and Troubadours	338
The State of other Countries	343
Italy	344
Conduct of the Roman Bishops	348
Universities	354
Other Crusades	356
And other Monastic Institutions	358
Divines and Philosophers	367
Thomas Aquinas	ib.
St. Bonaventure	369
Albertus Magnus	370
Roger Bacon	373
Robert Grosteste	376
The various Fortunes of Aristotle	380
The Historians	383
Italian	385
Matthew Paris	387
Poetry	390
Saxon and English Languages	391

Page.
Its Poetry 398
Latin Poetry 401
Introduction of Rhymes 406
Grammar and Rhetoric 409

BOOK VI.

STATE OF LEARNING FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY, TO THE INVENTION OF THE ART OF *PRINTING*, ABOUT THE YEAR 1450.

*The Fourteenth Century—the Poet Dante—State of Italy—Petrarca—his Researches after the Works of the Ancients—Character of his Writings—Boccaccio—Coluccio Salutato—the Learning of other Countries—Duns Scotus—John Wickliff—Geoffrey Chaucer—his Acquirements compared with those of others—and his Success with that of Petrarca and Boccaccio—French Literature—Froissard—Spanish and German: why stationary—*FIFTEENTH CENTURY: *General View of Italy—Council of Constance—Martin V.—Councils of Basil and Florence—Nicholas V.—the Enthusiasm of many Italians in Quest of Latin Authors—Progress of the Greek Language—Cardinal Bessarion—various Professors—Greek Works—Gianozzi Manetti—Cultivated State of the Latin Language—State of other Countries—Oxford and Cambridge—Antiquarian Researches—what Obstacles still remained—the Art of Printing discovered.*

Page.
The Fourteenth Century 412
The Poet Dante 413
The State of Italy 417
Petrarca 418
His Researches after the Works of the Ancients 425
Character of his Writings 430
Boccaccio 433
Coluccio Salutato 438
The Learning of other Countries 440

Page.
Duns Scotus 441
John Wickliff 444
Geoffrey Chaucer 447
His Acquirements compared with those of others 453
And his Success with that of Petrarca and Boccaccio 455
French Literature 457
Froissard 460
Spanish and German, why stationary 465
Fifteenth Century 466
General View of Italy ..... ib.
Council of Constance 469
Martin V. 470
Councils of Basil and Floree 471
Nicolas V. 472
The enthusiasm of many Italians in quest of Latin Authors 478
Progress of the Greek Language 482
Cardinal Bessarion ..... ib.
Various Professors 484
Greek Works 485
Gianozzo Manetti 486
Cultivated State of the Latin Language 489
Antiquarian Researches 492
State of other Countries 493
Oxford and Cambridge 496
What Obstacles still remained 507
The Art of Printing is discovered 509

CONCLUSION 511

APPENDIX.—N°. I.

ON THE LEARNING OF THE GREEKS, FROM THE SIXTH CENTURY, TO THE FALL OF THE EASTERN EMPIRE, IN. 1453.

Sixth Century: the Reign of Justinian—the Effects of Theological Controversies—Tribonian and Procopius, etc.—the Learning of

Justinian—his Taste for Building—Saint Sophia—the Seventh Century—State of Things under Heraclius—A New Controversy—few Writers of any Note—Eighth Century—Iconoclasm—low State of Learning—St. John Damascene—the Ninth Century more auspicious to Learning—the Patriarch Nicephorus—Attempts of Michael the Stammerer—Bardas favours the Cause of Letters—Photius—his principal Works—the Emperors Basil and Leo—Tenth Century: Constantine Porphyrogenitus—Simeon Metaphrastes—Suidas—the Embassy of Liutprand—Eleventh Century: State of the Empire—Michael Psellus—Alexius Comnenus—the First Crusade—Twelfth Century: John Comnenus—John Zonaras—Nicephorus Bryennius—Anna Comnena—Manuel Comnenus—Second Crusade—Manuel fond of Controversy—Eustathius, the Commentator of Homer—Athenæus—John Tzetzes—the closing Events of the Century—Thirteenth Century—Constantinople taken by the Latins—Monuments of Art destroyed—the Effects of the Capture on Learning—good Conduct of the expelled Princes—Nicetas and other Writers—State of the Greek Empire after its Restoration—Fourteenth Century—Literary Character of Andronicus—Theodorus Metochita—John Cantacuzenus—Nicephorus Gregorus—a curious Controversy—Progress of the Turks—Greek Anthologies—Fifteenth Century—the Question of Union between the Churches—Council of Ferrara and Florence—The Greeks return from Florence—Fall of the Eastern Empire—its three last Historians—State of the Greek Language.

Page.

The Sixth Century 523
The Reign of Justinian ..... ib.
The Effects of Theological Controversies 524
Tribonian and Procopius, &c. 529
The Learning of Justinian 532
His Taste for Building 533
St. Sophia 534
The Seventh Century 535
State of Things under Heraclius 536

Page.
A new Controversy 537
Few Writers of any Note 540
The Eighth Century 543
Iconoclasm ..... ib.
Low State of Learning 547
St. John Damascene ..... ib.
The Ninth Century more auspicious to Learning 549
The Patriarch Nicephorus 550
Attempts of Michael the Stammerer 552
Bardas favours the Cause of Letters ..... ib.
Photius 554
His principal Works 559
The Emperors Basil and Leo 563
Tenth Century 564
Constantine Porphyrogenitus ..... ib.
Simeon Metaphrastes 568
Suidas 569
The Embassy of Liutprand 472
Eleventh Century 573
State of the Empire ..... ib.
Michael Pscellus 576
Alexius Comnenus 581
The first Crusade 583
Twelfth Century 585
John Comnenus ..... ib.
John Zonaras 588
Nicephorus Bryennius 590
Anna Comnena 591
Manuel Comnenus 592
The Second Crusade ..... ib.
Manuel fond of Controversy 594
Eustathias the Commentator of Homer 595
Athenæus 597
John Tzetzes 599
The Closing Events of the Century 600
The Thirteenth Century ..... ib.
Constantinople taken by the Latins 601
Monuments of Art destroyed 604
The Effects of the Capture on Learning 607
Good Conduct of the expelled Princes 608

Page.
Nicetas and other Writers 609
State of the Greek Empire after its Restoration 613
Fourteenth Century 614
Literary Character of Andronicus 615
Theodorus Metochita 618
John Cantacuzenus 622
Nicephorus Gregoras 624
A Curious Controversy 625
Progress of the Turks 627
Greek Anthologies 628
Fifteenth Century 630
The Question of Union between the Churches ..... ib.
Council of Ferrara and Florence 632
The Greeks return from Florence 635
Fall of the Eastern Empire 637
Its Three last Historians 638
State of the Greek Language 639

APPENDIX.—No. II.

ON THE ARABIAN OR SARACENIC LEARNING.

A general View—the Saracens establish themselves in Africa and Spain—they encourage Letters—their Grammar—Eloquence—Poetry—Philology—Lexicographers—Philosophy—Ethics and Asceticism—Medicine—Natural History—Mathematics—Geography—History—the Fall of Granada, the last Moorish Settlement—and of the Caliphate—the three Arabian Historians—Conclusion.

Page.
A general View 643
The Saracens establish themselves in Africa and Spain 650
They encourage Letters 651
Their Grammar 654
Eloquence 656
Poetry 657
Philology 664
Lexicographers 667

CONTENTS.

	Page.
Philosophy	668
Ethics and Asceticism	675
Medicine	677
Natural History	682
Mathematics	685
Geography	689
History	693
The Fall of Granada, the last Moorish Settlement	719
And of the Caliphate	720
The Three Arabian Historians	721
Conclusion	724

A

LITERARY HISTORY

OF THE

MIDDLE AGES.

BOOK I.

A VIEW OF THE DECLINE OF LITERATURE AND THE ARTS, FROM THE CLOSE OF THE REIGN OF AUGUSTUS, TO THE FALL OF THE WESTERN EMPIRE, IN 476.

A SKETCH OF THE STATE OF LETTERS IN THE AUGUSTAN AGE—THE CAUSES OF THEIR RISE BRIEFLY EXAMINED—FIRST PERIOD OF THEIR DECLINE—SECOND PERIOD—THIRD PERIOD—DECLINE OF ELOQUENCE—OF POETRY—OF HISTORY—OF PHILOSOPHY, &c.—THE STATE OF THE LIBRARIES—DECLINE OF THE POLITE ARTS—THE STATE OF LITERATURE IN ITALY AND IN THE DISTANT PROVINCES—THE CAUSES OF THE DECLINE OF LITERATURE AND THE ARTS—WAS LITERATURE AFFECTED BY THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CHRISTIANITY—THE STATE OF GRECIAN LITERATURE DURING THE SAME PERIOD.

BOOK I.

A Sketch of the State of Letters in the Augustan age.

THE subject which I have proposed to treat in the present work is so extensive in itself, that I am unwilling to increase its bulk with any matter which is foreign to my purpose, or not essentially incorporated in the plan which I have attempted to execute. I shall not therefore delineate the golden

BOOK I.

period of Roman literature, from the fall of Carthage to the death of Augustus, comprising an era of a little more than a hundred and fifty years. After the conquest of Greece, the military genius of the Romans became tempered by something of a literary spirit; and the arts and sciences, which hitherto had languished in neglect, or been rejected with scorn, began to be cherished with fondness and cultivated with assiduity. The new ardour which was excited soon became manifest in the blaze of intellectual excellence which was produced. All the force and the blandishments of poetry have been concentrated in the works of Lucretius, of Virgil, and of Horace; while the Gracchi, Hortensius, Julius Cæsar*, and above all, Cicero attained to such a degree of excellence in oratory, as to leave it doubtful whether the palm of eloquence is due to them or to their Grecian masters. Sallust and Livy, and particularly the latter, are models of historical composition. Cicero taught the philosophy of Greece to speak the language of Rome, whilst he rendered the doctrines of the Grecian sages more perspicuous and captivating than they were found even in their native idiom. In architecture, Vitruvius laid down the rules of design and just proportion. Other studies were equally encouraged. In the annals of literary patronage the name of Mæcenas will long be remembered: even Augustus himself, whilst he held the reins of government, either cultivated by his genius, or protected by his favour, every laudable pursuit†. Applause,

* See Cicero de clar. Orat. pass.

† Sueton. in Aug. n. 89.

rewards, and honours, failed not to attend the public instructors of youth, among whom were sometimes found men of exalted science.

Of the estimation in which the polite arts were held, we may form some idea from the rapacity with which the cities of Greece were plundered, and collections of statues made. And this might be a principal cause, why Rome, at this time, satisfied with the easy means of procurement, had herself few artists whose names are recorded*. In a moment of strange alienation of mind, or of abject adulation, Virgil indeed hesitates not, in the most exquisite strains of poesy, to speak slightingly of the arts, and even of oratory; and to represent no pursuit as becoming the majesty of a Roman, but to hold the sceptre of command, to dictate laws, to spare the prostrate, and to humble the proud. Those are the pursuits which he recommends as peculiarly worthy the ambition of his fellow citizens †. But if the sweets of patronage or the dread of despotism could vitiate a mind of so much purity, or degrade one of so much sublimity as that of Virgil,

---

* Winkelman, Storia delle arti, T. II.

† Excudent alii spirantia mollius æra,
Credo equidem: vivos ducent de marmore vultus;
Orabunt causas meliùs; cælique meatus
Describent radio, et surgentia sidera dicent:
Tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento:
Hæ tibi erunt artes; pacisque imponere morem,
Parcere subjectis, et debellare superbos.

Æneid, L. VI.

BOOK I.

was it not even then a melancholy presage that the Romans had reached their highest point of intellectual elevation?

Hitherto Rome had been, and continued to be, the seat of learning, and the centre of the arts: but they visited, in their progress, the neighbouring cities, and from them passed to the remoter provinces. When her arms had surmounted the Alps, and the more western countries, discomfited by repeated victories could offer no further resistance, she had recourse to her usual and enlightened policy of civilizing those whom she had vanquished, and of extending the social habits and the civil jurisprudence with the arts, the sciences, and the language of Rome, to the extremities of the empire. For the gross manners of barbarians she substituted those of the most polished capital in the world; for the rough and inharmonious accents of an uncultivated dialect, she habituated the ear to the softer melody of the Latin tongue; and when she had allured them to the perusal, she laid before them the pages of her admired poets, her historians, and her philosophers; and, in exchange for the rude edifices of their fathers, she displayed the beautiful proportions of architectural design. Europe, say the historians, began to breathe and to recover strength; agriculture was encouraged; population increased; the ruined cities were rebuilt; new towns were founded; and, an appearance of prosperity succeeding, the havoc of war was, in some degree, repaired*. And indeed, when at this

* Dr. Robertson, View of the State of Europe, vol. 1. 8vo. p. 2.

remote period, we survey in their temples, their amphitheatres, their aqueducts, the mere ruins of the gorgeous structures which were raised by that mighty people, we feel compelled to acknowledge, that though misery and destruction at first followed the track of their arms, it was afterwards succeeded by happiness and abundance; and that they were not unworthy of the universal dominion which they had acquired.

I have somewhere seen an opinion hazarded, that it would have been well for the state of man, had Carthage triumphed, and the Roman power been subdued. It has been supposed that, compared with that of the sword, the spirit of commerce is mild and beneficent; that, acting under the influence of this spirit, Carthage would have respected the rights of nations, and have promoted, as herself interested in the event, their greater prosperity; that by her, nautical science would have been advanced, and new regions discovered, by which a more early and general intercourse would have taken place amongst nations, the condition of mankind would have been improved, and the arts of peace more generally cultivated. The theory is pleasing, but it is not in unison with the conduct of commercial nations. Their spirit is less often mild and beneficent, than selfish, rapacious, and mercenary. For them letters have few charms; and the culture of the nobler arts is apt to be neglected in the pursuit of sordid pelf.

Tacitus, in detailing the achievements of his Agricola in Britain, has a passage which illustrates the conduct of the Romans in their conquests.

BOOK I.

"The following winter was devoted to points of the highest utility and importance. In order to allure the scattered population of the country from the predatory habits to which they were accustomed, to more pacific and civilized pursuits, Agricola laboured to incite them by individual persuasion and public assistance, to erect towns and adorn them with temples and porticos. He praised the willing and he reproved the sluggish, till the rivalry of honour operated like the feeling of duty, or the stimulus of necessity. The next object of his policy was to inspire a passion for letters in the sons of the nobility. The genius of the Britons appeared to him superior to that of the Gauls; for the former had no sooner learned the language of Rome, than they discovered a desire to improve it into eloquence. Our fashions rose in their esteem; the toga was frequently seen among them; and by degrees they adopted our porticos and baths, the refinements of our architecture, and the embellishments of our luxury. But what the thoughtless and the ignorant considered as the charm of polished life, was in fact only an indication of the loss of their liberty and independance*."

But what is human must ever fluctuate; and the progress of learning, has been ingeniously represented as a curve line, which, having reached its greatest altitude, again descends to the plane from which it rose. Whilst the Romans were diffusing a taste for letters and for the arts of civilized life over the distant provinces, those letters and those arts were

* Vita Agric. c. 21.

rapidly verging to decline within the confines of Italy, and even within the walls of the capital. The perfect models of Roman eloquence, which had been furnished by Cicero, seemed to be left only to shame the puny efforts of his followers. The loss of liberty and the extinction of public spirit had put an end to that freedom of thought and grandeur of sentiment amongst the Romans, without which public speaking soon becomes only a vapid contest of sophistry or adulation. Cicero himself was not unconscious of the operation of those causes which, in his time, had secretly begun to corrupt the genius of Roman eloquence. To the intellectual pre-eminence of the Greeks he was never sparing of his praise; but he thought that in oratory the Romans had nobly struggled with them for the palm of victory. "Yet, in this very faculty," said he, "in which we have advanced from the most imperfect beginnings to the highest excellence, we may, as in all human things, soon expect to see symptoms of decrepitude and the process of decay *.

The Causes of their Rise briefly examined.

The declension of eloquence, of which so many motives of emolument and of fame conspired to promote the culture, might naturally be expected to be accompanied with the fall of many sister arts. Here however a question presents itself which is not easy to be solved, and which I shall do little more than state. What, it may be asked, were the causes that, at this period, had carried literature to so high a degree of excellence? Many, doubtless, were those causes arising from

* Tusculam, l. 1. n. 3.—l. 11. n. 2.

BOOK I.

a fortunate combination of circumstances, the principal of which may be referred, I think, as Cicero often confesses, to the habit of frequenting the Greek schools, and the consequent admiration of the perfect models, in every art, which were there exhibited. Curiosity was thus stimulated; and emulation was gradually spread from breast to breast, till a vivid desire was excited to acquire in the pursuits of literature and the arts, the same distinction which they had already attained by their military achievements.

First Period of their Decline, A. C. 14--138, from Augustus to Adrian.

The history of the decline of letters, as they regard Italy, has been treated in a manner at once so masterly and copious by a late Italian author*, that I might deservedly be accused of arrogance, were I to neglect his sources of information; though I should perhaps be charged with negligence of research if I employed them without reserve. Tiraboschi divides the whole period from the death of Augustus (which coincides with the fourteenth year of the Christian æra) to the fall of the Western Empire in 476, into three epochs, in each of which, having first exhibited a short view of the character and conduct of the successive emperors in regard to science and the arts, he details, under separate heads, the vicissitudes of literature, and the stages of its decline †.

When public liberty was extinct, it will readily be conceived how great must have been the influence of the imperial will

---

* *Tiraboschi. Storia della letteratura Italiana, in ten volumes 4to.*

† *T.* II.

on the state of learning, as it was either neglected, oppressed, or encouraged, according to the fluctuations of caprice, aversion, or regard. The mind, in general, turns from the race of the Cæsars with disgust, though some of them, as Tiberius and Claudius, were not devoid of literary acquirements.* It is with some pleasure that we dwell on the attempts of Vespasian to repair the evils of his predecessors, but Titus is the subject of more pleasurable contemplation.† He was an amiable prince and an accomplished scholar; but the fates seemed only to shew him to the earth, that his loss might be deplored. After the death of the tyrant Domitian, we welcome the reigns of Nerva, of Trajan, and, may I say, of Adrian? Adrian was, indeed, learned; but his erudition was tinctured with a jealousy of the literary fame of others, which bordered upon meanness, and was totally unworthy of a sovereign. Such was his jaundiced taste, that he preferred the elder Cato to Cicero; and Ennius to Virgil; and even the names of Homer and of Plato excited his disgust.‡ Trajan, bred from his earliest youth to the profession of arms, and ranking with the first generals of antiquity, had not a sufficiency of leisure for the acquisition of learning; but he wanted not judgment to distinguish, nor munificence to reward, those by whom it was possessed. The scholars, not only of Rome but of Greece, were selected as the objects of his patronage, and equally felt the effects of his liberality.

A little more than a hundred years had elapsed, for Adrian

---

* *Sueton. in Tib. et Claud.* † *Id. in Tit.*

‡ *Ælius Spartian. in Adrian.*

BOOK I.

died in 138; and if learning, during so short a period, as we shall soon see, had sensibly declined, want of liberty rather than want of imperial encouragement was the cause. The great men in the age of Augustus had received the first impulse to their genius before the destruction of the republic; and the effects of the spirit of liberty, in some degree, remained after the ancient constitution had degenerated into an absolute monarchy. When suspicion was universally excited, the character alone of being learned could hardly fail to awaken jealousy; and the annals of the times have recorded the names of many eminent scholars, who became the victims of a tyrant's fears.* A sensitive timidity, rather than a robust hardihood of character, is too often the result of solitary application; and to that timidity may be ascribed the adulatory baseness, by which the writings of many authors at that time were disgraced. Velleius Paterculus did not blush to praise Tiberius, and his band of courtiers; nor Quintilian to extol even the genius of Domitian.† Under such leaders, the political and judicial constitution of the empire became a prey to every assailant, whilst internal discord, vitiated manners, and an unbounded luxury, gave new strength to the wasting force of profligacy and corruption.‡

Second Period, An. 138—313, from Adrian to Constantine

If any thing could have rescued from merited reproach the name of Adrian, it would have been the adoption of Antoninus Pius. Endowed by nature with superior talents, which

---

* *Corn. Tacit. Annal. Sueton. in Caligul.*

† *Vel. Paterc. Quintil. Instit. l. iv. c. 1. l. x. c. 1.* ‡ *Juvenal. Satyr. passim.*

had been carefully improved by cultivation, and possessing an easy flow of eloquence, Antoninus; amidst the cares of empire, could find time for literary pursuits; but it is related of him as principally praiseworthy, that, on the professors of the arts, whom he established in Rome and in the provinces, he bestowed stipends, honours, and a variety of privileges.* Marcus Aurelius, a name dear to virtue and to science, pursued the same path, and sought glory by the same honourable toils. He had been tutored, from early youth, in all the branches of elegant literature; but his mind, says the historian,† was addicted to serious reflection; and he often neglected the captivating society of the Muses to court the fellowship of the severe disciples of Zeno. In the schools of the Stoics he experienced his greatest delight; and he modelled his conduct by their precepts. Notwithstanding this preference the masters in every science were objects of his favour; and it is amusing to read of the honours which he conferred. To one he raised a statue in the senate; a second was made a proconsul; and he twice promoted a third to the consular dignity. Their images were suffered to repose with those of his tutelary deities; and he offered victims, and strewed flowers, on their tombs.‡

Of the persons who were thus honoured by imperial patronage, few could make pretensions to classical elegance; and many, of whom the greater number were Greeks, clothed in the philosophic garb, devoted their lives to the severer

* *Julius Capitolin. in Antonin.* † *Id. in M. Antonin.* ‡ *Ibid.*

BOOK I. studies; or, in order to secure the countenance of their sovereign, affected the austerity of his school. If Marcus Aurelius returned thanks to the gods for having weaned him from the allurements of poetry and eloquence, his subjects would be less disposed to cultivate those arts which he had renounced.

At the name of Commodus, the son of Aurelius, and of the cruel Septimius Severus, of Caracalla, and of the dissolute Elagabalus, science hangs her head; nor, in the succeeding reigns, does she find much ground for comfort, though Alexander Severus, and a few others, were well inclined to espouse her cause.* But it was observed, that an immature death too often abridged the lives of those, from whose virtues, or from whose talents, some good might have been expected. From Diocletian, or his colleagues in the empire, whom no education had refined, and who were little more than soldiers of fortune, what good could be expected to proceed? The school of arms is not the school of letters; and whatever had been their disposition, they were too much involved in civil broils, and absorbed in the interests of ambition, to attend to those of literature and science.

In this rapid glance, over a period of somewhat more than a hundred and seventy years, what a scene has the eye surveyed! The greatest portion of it is filled with conspira-

* See their respective historians among the Augustæ Historiæ Scriptoros.

cies and seditions, bloodshed and devastation of all kinds. Successive competitors were continually struggling for empire; and he, who to-day was seen trodden in the dust, had but a few days before been raised by the legions to the throne.

A new order of things, and a more pleasurable prospect now open before us. We behold a Christian Emperor, who was adorned with those virtues, military and civil, which could command the respect of distant nations, and the love of his subjects, at the death of Licinius, invested with the sceptre of the Roman world! But were letters and the polite arts as dear to Constantine as the general interests of the vast society, to the superintendence of which he had been called?—If we may believe the historian of his life,* who is certainly sometimes too encomiastic, letters and the arts were the object of his fond solicitude. His mind had been early imbued with a tincture of learning; he afterwards cultivated eloquence, and composed in the Latin language; and the decrees, published by him in favour of the professors of the learned arts, which may still be read,† are an incontestable proof of his good-will. But Rome, and I may say, the western world, has a charge against him, which can never be effaced: he removed the seat of empire to Byzantium. The charge is thus justly stated by a modern writer.‡ The city of

---

* *Euseb. vita Constant. l.* 1. † See the *Codex Justinianus, l. x. xiii.*

‡ *Tiraboschi. Storia della Letteratura, t.* 11. *l. iv. c.* 1.

BOOK I.

Constantinople, he observes, founded as a rival to Rome, and chosen for the imperial residence, proved a source of fatal evils to the ancient capital, to Italy, and to its literature. Rome hitherto had been deemed the metropolis of the world; but the attention of mankind was soon attracted to the new imperial residence. All affairs of moment were transacted at Constantinople, which became the general resort of persons of eminence in all ranks and professions; and what Rome had been was seen only in the dreary pomp of her edifices, and the silent magnificence of her streets. Literature also forsook her former abode; and whither were her professors likely to retire, but to the new city, where rewards and honours were to be found? The cultivation of the Greek in preference to the Latin language, in a country of Greeks, could not fail soon to be adopted, to the obvious detriment of the western learning. And when the empire, on the death of Constantine, was divided, Rome, even then, was not the ordinary seat of her princes. Her loss, however, turned to the advantage of other cities. When she ceased to be the universal centre, men of learning were sometimes satisfied with their distant stations, where, in a sphere less splendid, they could circulate round them the love, and invite to the cultivation, of letters.

The sons of Constantine, though two of them had their stations in the west, were little solicitous to repair the injury which the removal of the seat of empire had occasioned; and when, after some years, Constantine became sole master, so engaged was he with the necessary defence of his widely extended dominions, or so absorbed in the Arian contro-

versy, which then distracted the christian world, that classical literature in vain implored his fostering care. Besides, at this time, the systems of Grecian philosophy had gained so many admirers among the converts to christianity, and by their alluring theories had so far succeeded in perplexing its simple truths, that men of the brightest abilities eagerly engaged in the new pursuits; and that harmonious and manly language, which the sages, the poets, and orators of Greece had spoken, was alienated to the purposes of sophistic disputation.

The line of Constantine was terminated by Julian, a prince of some abilities, and who was not indifferent to the interests of literature; but his mind was vitiated by a more than ordinary portion of levity and credulity, and hence he became an easy prey to the artifices of the philosophers, whom he professed to admire, and who were still addicted to the heathen ritual. To their discourses he had given peculiar attention: he had, besides, been trained in the habit of composition, and, having frequented the schools of Greece, he had learned to write their language with purity and ease. His hatred of christianity was extreme; and though the means which he adopted for the promotion of learning were highly commendable, yet his views were so illiberal, that he refused the aid of science to the professors of the new religion, in order, as far as lay in his power, to oppress them with the reproach of ignorance. He forbade their public masters to teach; and as they believe not, he said, in the gods, whose names are repeated in the very authors whom they most love to interpret, let them repair rather to the assemblies of the Galileans (as he opprobriously termed the christians) and there com-

BOOK I.

ment on the works of Matthew and Luke. His reign did not embrace a period of two years.*

Not many months after the death of Julian, the empire was permanently divided into the two great members of the east and west. To the west I shall confine myself. Valentinian I. himself a poet, as is related,† an artist, and endowed with eloquence, passed several laws in order to restore the christian teachers to their former privileges, and to encourage general learning, even in the distant provinces.‡ His motives were laudable, and his measures had an obvious tendency to encourage literary application; but do not his laws, at the same time, prove, how much the general standard of study had declined, and how languid the desire of mental improvement had become? Indeed, a contemporary writer,§ coupling the increasing ignorance with the licentious depravity of the times, has described the houses of Rome, in which the sciences had once flourished, as resounding with musical instruments, the performers on which had taken the place of grave philosophers; where jugglers had succeeded to orators; and the libraries were for ever closed, like the monuments of the dead.

I shall say nothing of Gratian, whom Ausonius has immo-

---

* *See Ammianus Marcellinus pass. Liban. in Julian.* and on the works of Julian, *Fabric. Bib. Græca, t. vii. c. viii.*

† *Auson. Opera, p. 373.*

‡ *See the Codex Theod.*

§ *Ammian. Marcel. l. xiv. c. vi.*

derately praised,* and whom, perhaps, as a grateful return for his panegyric, the prince raised to the consulate; nor of his brother Valentinian II. both of whom were massacred in the spring of life. It has redounded much to the praise of Gratian, that he invited the great Theodosius to the support of the falling empire, who, by that mean, was raised to the possession of the eastern throne. He afterwards also occupied that of the west. This prince, though he was not himself profoundly learned, could admire learning in others, and could devote his leisure hours to instructive reading, when the toils of government allowed him an interval of repose. The simple manners of the good and virtuous were, it has been said, his principal delight; but he failed not to reward every art and every talent of an useful, or even of an harmless kind, with a judicious liberality.

The fourth century closed, and the fifth opened, while the purple was disgraced by the imbecile Honorius, one of the sons of Theodosius. This was a period of accumulated distress to the Roman States. In the preceding years they had often, with various success, been invaded by the barbarians from the north, first in quest of plunder, and then, as they felt the allurements of a milder climate, or the pleasures of a less savage life, in quest of settlements. Resistance, though sometimes crowned by victory, was ultimately vain; for new bodies of armed men, with their wives and children, their slaves and flocks, kept constantly advancing with steady perseverance. In less than two centuries from their first erup-

* *See Auson. Oper.*

BOOK I.

tion, they extended their ravage and their conquest over Thrace, Pannonia, Gaul, Spain, Africa, and finally, over Italy. Even Rome, in the tenth year of the fifth century, saw Alaric with his Goths within her walls.*

The effects of these invasions on literature and the arts, and more than the invasions, the effects of the permanent settlements in the provinces, will hereafter be detailed. Let me now only add, that ten emperors, from the death of Honorius in 423, filled the western throne, during whose reigns the Huns,† under Attila, in 452, overran Italy with furious impetuosity. Genseric, with his Vandals from Africa, in 455, surprised Rome, which he abandoned to pillage during fourteen days. New scenes of devastation were daily repeated; and finally, when a civil war, between the competitors for the throne, filled up the measure of misfortune, the barbarians, of whom the provinces were full, and with whom the ranks of the army were crowded, demanded, as their stipulated property, one half of the lands of Italy; and, when this was refused, aspired to a higher price. Odoacer, the chief of the Heruli, pursued his victorious career to the walls of Rome, despoiled Augustulus, a name of ominous import, of the purple, proclaimed himself king of Italy, and ascended the vacant throne. The western empire closed. This was in the year 476, at which time Africa obeyed the

---

* *See Jornandes De rebus Geticis.* He was himself a Goth, and bishop of Ravenna, in the reign of Justinian.—See Book II.

† The description of the character and persons of the Huns, by *Jornandes*, (*c. xxiv*) is curious.—See Book II.

Vandals; Spain and part of Gaul were subject to the Goths; the Burgundians and Franks occupied the remainder; and many parts of Britain were subject to the domination of the Saxons.

Having concluded this historical view, I feel an apprehension lest, in attempting to render it concise, I have rendered it useless; and yet it would not have accorded with my purpose to be more prolix. The connexion which it has with the principal subject is obvious to me, and I think that it will be not less apparent to the reader as I proceed. The patronage of power may often operate only as a stimulus to adulation, but great exertions can seldom prosper without its aid; and therefore in the long train of princes, who sometimes ennobled, and sometimes disgraced, the imperial throne, I was willing to exhibit their characters, their tastes, their acquirements, and their propensities, as they had a relation to the cause of literature. But, amidst the havoc of war and bloodshed, of infuriated ambition and jealous rivalry, what had literature to expect? The Italian provinces were afterwards exposed to the inroads of barbarous hordes, who spread general devastation over the fairest portion of the globe, and spared neither the arts nor literature in their rage. Living in the midst of their triumphant invaders, condemned to listen to their rude speech, and to form their organs to its sounds, few had leisure, and fewer had inclination, to cultivate studies, which those barbarians had not taste to admire;* but which, they were

* The character drawn of his countrymen by *Jornandes* is far more favour-

BOOK I. rather naturally led to despise, as they had not taught those, by whom they were cultivated, to defend their altars and their homes.

I have hitherto merely sketched the general outline of the decline of literature through this period of nearly four hundred and seventy years, and I shall now proceed to arrange it under separate heads, that I may show with more distinctness the progress of its decay. We will return, therefore, to the close of the Augustan age. But I must previously observe, that, in discussing this subject the reader must not expect a critical disquisition, or rather comparison of the several authors with their predecessors. Such a work would be devoid of interest to the generality of readers. It will, however, be gratifying to me to think, that, in this part of my subject, I am writing principally to those who have been delighted with the masterly productions of the Augustan age, and who, in turning to the pages of less polished times, have experienced a sensible decrease of their pleasure and their admiration.

The Decline of Eloquence.

I begin with the consideration of *eloquence*, because the decline of that art was first perceived. Cicero himself, as the reader will recollect, anticipated that event. This illustrious orator had carried his favourite pursuit to a pitch of excellence which was never surpassed in any age. To force of sen-

---

able, *de rebus Geticis*, c. 5, 11. They were strangers, if we may believe him, to no science!—See Book II.

timent he united majesty of diction; he exhibited copiousness blended with precision; and whilst he luxuriates in richness of phrase, he is not negligent of simplicity. If the votaries of eloquence had attempted to rival this model of perfection, they should not have deviated from those principles of nature, or of reason and of taste, which he so ardently pursued. But they would be greater than Cicero, and by other means. They complained that his style was too diffuse; his periods not sufficiently compressed; and that his language had occasionally a mixture of convivial familiarity. That accumulation of defects, therefore, occurred, which might have been expected. Their copiousness became a feeble and tedious prolixity; their precision degenerated into obscurity; and natural ornament was exchanged for a vitiated glare of decoration. In one word, the general style of the new orators was harsh, enigmatical, quaint, encumbered with unnecessary words, and with superfluous ornament.

But how, it may be asked, could that taste, which was formed on the best models of excellence, thus rapidly degenerate? Without endeavouring to scrutinize the various causes of this event, I will merely observe that, in addition to the injudicious choice of a new road to excellence, and the instability of all human attainments, Rome had not, at this time, the same incitements to the ambition of her statesmen and the zeal of her orators. Since the destruction of liberty, in proportion as the whole judicial power became invested in the will of an individual, the senate ceased to be the theatre of a noble emulation; and the forum was no longer the favourite resort of the people. In all countries, I believe that the people are the best judges of genuine eloquence. Their

BOOK I.

attention may be seduced by tinsel and glitter, and their understandings may be confounded by indefinite and mysterious terms; but when Mark Antony, in plain and simple language, commends Cæsar, speaks honourably of his murderers, and shews his bloody garment pierced with numerous stabs, they seize the arms which first present themselves, and rush with frantic rage to the houses of his assassins.* Had an appeal been made to this tribunal, that is, to the judgment of unsophisticated nature, the false taste, of which I speak, would probably have been corrected, or its progress retarded.

It was fostered by men of talents, and of high repute, in the republic of letters. Among these the courtly Mæcenas has been sometimes named, who was, perhaps, a judge of merit, and certainly its generous protector; but, from the character of his mind, which was extravagantly voluptuous, he was naturally an admirer† of that style, in which a masculine energy and animation were not predominant.‡ Ovid is also here liable to his share of blame. The graceful languor of his poetry may have communicated some portion of effeminate taste to the other departments of literature. Those who are enervated by luxury are accessible to contagion on every side. But Asinius Pollio may, with most semblance of truth, be accused of having vitiated the public taste, as far as the example, the writings, or the admonitions, of one man can be supposed capable of producing that effect. He lived dur-

---

* *Plutarch. in M. Brut.* † *Vell. Paterc. l.* 11. *c.* 88.

‡ *Suet. in Aug.*

ing the age of Augustus, was a celebrated orator and historian, and is said to have opened the first public library in Rome. But Pollio was seized with a jealousy of the fame of others, and particularly of that of Cicero. Cicero, therefore, became the object of his constant depreciation; and this he could do with little opposition, as the name of the strenuous advocate of liberty could not but be ungrateful to the ears of the despot by whom he had been betrayed, and liberty had been extinguished. It was probably a consideration of this kind, more than any real want of taste, that induced the persons, of whom I speak, to depart from the great model of eloquence, and to adopt another style. That of Pollio has been described and criticised by judges, not far removed from the times in which he lived. "In him," observes Quintilian,* "there is invention, great accuracy, by some deemed too great; there are design and spirit of execution: but the whole composition possesses as little of the finished elegance and charms of Cicero, as if he had lived a hundred years before him." The opinion of others is not more favourable. Even Seneca, the philosopher, though himself was equally censurable, could animadvert with severity upon the style of Asinius Pollio. The jejune, the abrupt, the affected, they observe, now began to prevail, where copiousness, grace, and elegance † had before been seen.

Quintilian enters more at large into this subject, where he

---

* *Instit. l. x. c.* 1.

† See this subject fully discussed by Tiraboschi, *t.* 1. *p.* 251—280, to whose labours I have often obligations, when I do not express them.

BOOK I. describes the endless labour of a modern orator intent on composition.* He had premised, that elocution, that is, the art of conveying to an audience in embellished diction, the various conceptions of the mind, was the great work of oratory, and could not be accomplished, except by unremitting assiduity. But he remarks, how much this important point was mistaken, when, instead of adopting such words as the subject naturally presented, extraneous decorations were sought with a puerile fondness; and the whole composition was enervated by the luxury of effeminate ornaments. What might be readily expressed was smothered under a mass of words; and what had been sufficiently discussed was repeated till disgust was produced. Nothing pleases, that is strictly proper; what another would have said, must not be admitted; the vocabularies of obscure poets are ransacked; and it is thought that true genius has been shewn only when genius is necessary to detect the sense. Cicero, he adds, had indeed laid it down as a rule, that, in oratorical composition, there could not be a more vicious practice than to depart from the common language and ordinary sentiments of mankind; but what little judgment and discrimination, he says ironically, did Cicero possess, and how much more exquisite is our taste, who are too fastidious not to loathe whatever is agreeable to nature and to truth!

Of the orations of Asinius Pollio, and of many others in the same line of eloquence, nothing is come down to us; nor have we any reason to lament their loss. We know what their

* *Proœm. l. viii.*

character was. But we have some writings of his contemporary, Seneca, the rhetorician, the father of the philosopher; the declamations ascribed to Quintilian; and the celebrated panegyric of Pliny the Younger addressed to Trajan. If the declamations ascribed to Quintilian could be proved to have come from his pen, it would be clear that, when he composed them, he had overlooked every precept which he had inculcated in his *Oratorical Institutions*. They can be esteemed as no better than exercises on imaginary topics, which were proposed in the schools, by which it was thought that the art of public speaking might be acquired; and the style, in which they are written, is a striking exemplification of the false taste which has been described.* The same opinion must be entertained of the orations, or rather declamations, of Seneca, which were formed on a similar plan. Indeed, in the ears of an elegant scholar, the name of Seneca is almost synonymous with *affectation* and *bad taste*. The family was from Spain. Here, if it would not occupy too much space, I could with pleasure copy a passage† from Quintilian, on the moral virtues and classical vices of Seneca the philosopher. Part of the passage I have mentioned would apply to the father, where he shows how just his own taste was, and how just also was the judgment which he had formed of that uncommon man. Quintilian in this place discovers an anxiety to put young men on their guard against a writer, whose very defects

* The reader may find them affixed to some copies of the *Institutions*. They are in that of London, An. 1641.—See *Fabricii Bibliotheca Latina*, *t.* 1.

† *L. x. c.* 1.

BOOK I. pleased, and whose style was the more dangerous, as it abounded *dulcibus vitiis*. In the concluding sentence, it appears to me, that he himself exhibits an example of that studied prettiness of thought and expression, which he had so severely condemned but just before. *Digna enim fuit illa natura*, (that of Seneca) *quæ meliora vellet, quæ quod voluit, effecit.*

Of Quintilian, I must not omit to say, that whatever country gave him birth, whether Italy or Spain,* he resided in Rome, where he gave lectures in eloquence, and received a salary from the treasury. In the reign of Domitian he afterwards wrote his *Institutions*, a work, which, notwithstanding some prolixity in the manner, and some blemishes of style, has never been surpassed in justness of precept, nicety of discernment, and depth of critical erudition. The want of Ciceronian purity, with which he is justly charged, would of itself, if any further argument were necessary, incontestably prove that decline of taste which we deplore, particularly when he who took so much pains to guard others from its seductions could not himself escape the lure.

The panegyric of Pliny, which is admired by the young, but read with little pleasure by those whose taste is more refined and whose judgment more matured, may be esteemed a monument of the highest excellence which could be accomplished by the talents of the age. In his private correspond-

* *Tiraboschi, t.* 11, *p.* 123.

ence* Pliny often bewails the decline of letters, expresses his admiration of better days, and proposes Cicero as the model of imitation. Yet, at what a distance does he follow his master! A modern critic † speaks thus of Pliny and his panegyric. It cannot be denied, says Le Harpe, that he possesses extraordinary brilliancy; but he is too ambitious of shining, and he does nothing but shine. He shows a marked solicitude to give point to all his thoughts, and make them strike by an epigrammatic turn. This constancy of toil, this profusion of glitter, this monotony, as it were, of genius, soon generate fatigue. I would wish to read him as I would Seneca, by fragments. And where, we naturally ask, is that noble and elevated tone, which we admired in Cicero; that easy and engaging copiousness; that connexion and flow of ideas; that tissue in which all is well combined, and nothing confused; that energy of expression, and that harmony of period, those vivid illustrations and glaring figures, which give beauty and animation to every part? Instead of these we have a cluster of gems, a perpetual sparkling, which for a moment excites pleasure or even admiration, but which at last dazzles by its brilliancy, and wearies by its glare, till the feeling of satiety is produced. Then where was the patience of Trajan, when this discourse was pronounced before him?— The praise which it contains of his virtues might, indeed, as we can readily conceive, cause the emperor to feel less of that languor which a more indifferent reader is apt to feel. But the truth is, that the panegyric was not addressed to Trajan in the prolix form which it afterward received.

---

* See *his Epistles.*

† *Cours de Litterature, par La Harpe, t. iii. p. 228.*

BOOK I. C. Plinius Secundus, whose talents were equalled only by his virtues, exhibited in early life that assemblage of high qualities which laid the foundation of his future greatness. He was an object of admiration in the court even of Domitian; but the death of the tyrant, probably, saved his life. Under Nerva, and his successor Trajan, he was promoted to offices of great dignity and trust. His epistles, which must be ever read with pleasure, shew us who were the friends whom he honoured most; what was the spirit and the character of the times in which he lived; and what the vices owing to the pernicious agency of which the empire was hastening to decay. The ease and elegance of these epistles have caused some persons to prefer them to those of Cicero; but the instances of false taste, by which they are vitiated, are too striking even for their excellence to conceal.

In Pliny, then, who was the most elegant scholar of the age, we have the "*honeyed defects*," the *dulcia vitia*, which rendered the style of Seneca mischievously seductive; and what was there left which could arrest the progressive depravation of the public taste? The names of some orators are recorded after the time of Adrian; but their works have perished. Indeed, from the circumstances of the times, the art of oratory gradually ceasing to be either honourable or lucrative, it was at last totally relinquished by men of eminence. It thus fell into the inferior hands of the rhetoricians, sometimes called grammarians, of whom the historians speak with praise: but were the historians competent to judge? The style of their own works is the best clue to their competency.*

* See *Hist. August. Script. Ann. Marcel. Sidon. Apoll.*

Much is said at this period of the eloquence of the Grecian sophists, who had long found admirers in Rome; but when we know, that their chief excellence consisted in a ready utterance, and a presumptuous effrontery in haranguing with extemporaneous carelessness on whatever subject might be proposed, the cause of pure oratory had, it must be confessed, little to gain from their exertions*.

The reader must now excuse me, if I briefly despatch the remaining period of Latin eloquence. Public schools of the art were still maintained; and there were orators, of whom the times spoke in accents of the highest praise, comparing them with, or preferring them to, Cicero, or the best models of antiquity. Amongst the orators of whom we are speaking, the first place was occupied by Aurelius Symmachus, towards the close of the fourth century. He was a man of talents, which the ablest masters of the age had laboured to cultivate; and he filled the highest offices in the state. The contemporaries of Symmachus are never tired of loading him with encomiums. Ten books of his *Letters* are still preserved; and among them his address, on a solemn occasion to the Emperor Theodosius. As a sample of his eloquence, and of that of the age in which he lived, this address may be read. Erasmus observes, that they may admire Symmachus, whom long, rather then good, speaking can delight†.

---

* See *Storia della Letter. Ital. t.* 11. *p.* 305—317.

† Erasmus *in Ciceronian.*—See on this period Tiraboschi, *t.* 11. *p.* 423—442, on Symmachus *Fabric. Bib. Lat. t.* 11.

BOOK I.
The Decline of Poetry.

Were the ties by which all the branches of knowledge are united, and the general principles of taste clearly discerned, we should not require facts to prove that the declension of eloquence was accompanied with that of the sister arts.

The age indeed, of genuine poetry survived that of eloquence, as Virgil, Tibullus, Horace, and Ovid, who formed the most brilliant æra of Roman poetry, had many years to live, when the loss of liberty had paralyzed the efforts of the orator and extinguished the fire of his eloquence. But when death had consigned the poets of the Augustan age to the grave, causes connected with the state of the times contributed to prevent the expansion of poetic genius in their successors. The illustrious Germanicus, indeed, had evinced a taste for poetry, but the distractions of a military life contributed to divert his thoughts from literary pursuits.

This period was distinguished by four epic poets, Lucan, Valerius Flaccus, Statius, and Silius Italicus, on whose merits various judgments have been pronounced. Many years are now passed since I read them; and I believe that, with the exception of Lucan, they are read by few, except professed critics or antiquaries. This may form a sufficient criterion of their works.

Lucan died when in his twenty-seventh year, and in the reign of Nero. He had imprudently contended with the tyrant himself for the poetic crown, and more imprudently engaged in a conspiracy against his life. The immature age of the poet readily accounts for the imperfections of his

work; and he might have approached nearer the excellence of Virgil had he not aspired to eclipse his fame. By Quintilian he is described to be "ardent and impetuous, great in his sentiments, but more fit to be ranked amongst orators than poets*." The praise is feeble. The ardour, however, and impetuosity of his mind communicate so much energy to his expressions, and so much grandeur to his images, that he sometimes rises to the sublime. But he knows not where to stop; and his judgment is not sufficiently strong to controul the extravagance of his imagination. His glare of colouring fatigues; and the natural interest of his subject is weakened or destroyed by the prolixity of his details.

Impelled by the fire of youth, observes the Italian critic†, Lucan sits down to compose an epic poem which shall leave the Æneis behind it. But how can this be effected? I seem to see a young and inexperienced sculptor, before whose eyes stands a Grecian statue of exquisite workmanship. He will form another that in beauty shall surpass it. But in the model there is a proportion of parts, a force of expression, a grace of attitude, which no art, can exceed. What then must be done? He has recourse to the forced and the gigantic; and behold a colossus comes forth, of which the members are vast, but void of that proportion from which beauty springs; of which the attitude has energy, but an energy out of nature; and if the expression has force, it is a

---

* *Instit. l. x. c.* 1.

† *Tiraboschi, t.* II. *p.* 72.—See also the *Polymetis of Spence, Dial.* IV. and *Fabric. Bib. Lat. t.* I.

BOOK I.

force which indicates violence and distortion. The rude or unlettered spectator, whose admiration is increased by the physical magnitude of an object, views the form with wonder, whilst the man of taste turns away from it with disgust. Such is the Pharsalia when compared with the Æneis. In Virgil, the characters, the descriptions, the speeches, the narrations are dictated by nature; and nature herself is pourtrayed with the force, the delicacy, the elegance, which are her essential attributes. But in Lucan all is inflated, is deformed, is gigantic; his speeches are declamatory, and his descriptions are grotesque.

If such be the Pharsalia, which is confessedly the best production after the days of Virgil, can we expect more perfection in the succeeding poets? And let me observe that, as the defects, which have been noticed in Lucan, were of the same character as those which disfigured the oratory of the same period, it is plain their source was the same.

From *Valerius Flaccus*, whose *recent* death, in the reign of Domitian, Quintilian laments *, we have a poem on the expedition of the *Argonauts*. The impression of disgust which seizes the mind, when, from the beautiful scenery of a highly cultivated country, we enter on a desert, sterile, uninhabited, and forlorn, may, it has been said †, aptly represent what is felt, when from the Æneis of Virgil we pass to the *Argonautics*

---

* *Instit. l. x. c.* 1.

† *Tiraboschi, t.* II. *p.* 74.—Other critics are less severe: see *Spence u ante.*

of Flaccus. His flight is always near the ground; and he must be satisfied to rank with those who will make love to the muses in despite of natural impediments. His language is too studied; his style unequal, and sometimes obscure.

On the works of *Statius*, of which the principal is the *Thebaid*, or the conquest of Thebes, a more favourable judgment is pronounced. It is allowed that he possessed the talents of a poet; but that the taste of the age vitiated their application. He was an admirer of Virgil, but he flattered himself that he might equal his greatness by tumid affectation. Hence he labours to be gigantic in his pace; and his conceptions are monstrous when he thinks that they are sublime. Juvenal, however, tells us*, that the *Thebaid* was the favourite study of the Roman people; so much was their attention excited by its charms. Need we furnish a more striking proof of the declining taste of Rome? And another proof the same Statius can supply; for, after he had furnished so much delight to the people, and filled the theatre with applause, the satirist adds, that he wanted bread. He lived under Domitian.

Fortune was more favourable to *Silius Italicus*. He had

---

* Curritur ad vocem jucundam, et carmen amicæ
Thebaidos, lætam fecit cum Statius urbem,
Promisitque diem; tanta dulcerdine captos
Afficit ille animos, tantaque libidine vulgi
Auditur. *Sat.* VII. *v.* 82, *&c.*

The poet, some think, spoke ironically.—See Spence.

BOOK I.

been consul in the last year of Nero, a proconsul in Asia, and among the lands which he possessed, as well as houses stored with books, and statues, and pictures, he particularly delighted in a villa, which once belonged to Cicero, and in another near Naples, which contained the tomb of Virgil *. But nature had denied him that to which he most aspired, the inspiration of a poet. The poem by which he is known as an author, is an account of the second *Punic War*, in seventeen books, which some have called a gazette in verse. It is destitute of fancy or invention, and the narrative flows or stagnates in a languid stream, which lulls to sleep rather than awakens interest. He has not a single quality which kindles emotion or produces delight. He is uniformly tedious and insipid. Silius patronized the arts, passed whole days in the society of the learned, and often visited the tomb of the Mantuan bard, but without catching one particle of his inspiration. He was denominated the *ape* of Virgil. He saw the beginning of the reign of Trajan †.

To the reader of classical discernment I shall leave the obscure Persius, and the indignant Juvenal, whose satires he will compare with the terse and polished productions of Horace, in the same line of composition. The first wrote in the reign of Nero, the second in that of Trajan ‡; and if, as I cannot doubt, their inferiority to the Augustan model shall be perceived, it may well be imputed to their vain attempt to sur-

---

* *Plin. l.* III. *p.* vii.—The letter may be read with pleasure.

† See *Fabric. Bib. Lat. t.* 1. ‡ *Ibid.*

pass what was perfect. But Juvenal nevertheless, on many accounts, merits our admiration; his moral reflections are as forcible as they are true; and he has sentiments, the energy of which has never been surpassed.

These, if we except the epigrams of Martial, are the principal productions of the period which we have reviewed. Of many others the historians speak; and if merit could be inferred from numbers, surely no age was ever more rich in poetic genius. There is a passage in one of the epistles of Pliny * which shews, that the Romans, in his time, had begun to lose their taste for public reading. "This year," he says, "has proved extremely fertile in poetical productions: during the whole month of April, scarcely a day has passed, in which we have not been entertained with the recital of some poem. It is a pleasure to me to find, notwithstanding there seems to be so little disposition in the public to attend assemblies of this kind, that letters still flourish, and that men of genius are not discouraged from exhibiting their performances. It is visible, that the greater part of the audience which is collected on these occasions, comes with reluctance: they loiter round the place of assembly, join in little parties of conversation, and send every now and then to inquire whether the author is come in, whether he has read the preface, or whether he has almost finished the piece? Then, with an air of the greatest indifference, they just look in, and withdraw again; some by stealth, and others with less ceremony. It was not thus in the time of our ancestors."

* *L.* 1. *ep.* XIII.

BOOK I.

Nothing will detain us in the succeeding period, when even the number of poets had decreased, and the compositions of the few, which have come down to us, are said (for I have not read them) to deserve little attention. But, after the accession of Constantine, when less might be expected, we open, not without admiration, the miscellaneous works of Claudian *. He was born on the banks of the Nile, and resided at Rome during that inauspicious period, when Honorius held the sceptre, and the cries of the barbarians, which menaced ruin to Italy, might well disperse the visions or chill the transports of a poetical mind. Such were the unpropitious circumstances in which he wrote. I know with what severity he is sometimes criticised. The harmony of his lines, observes Laharpe †, resembles the tinkling of a bell, which never varies. And the Italian writer ‡, allowing that he may rank with the best poets after the Augustan age, says, his genius was lively and his fancy fervid; but seldom does he keep within the limits which reason prescribes to those faculties. Like Lucan and Statius, he is impetuously hurried on. To judge from his first rising, the clouds must be too confined for his flight: but his wings soon tire, till he falls and creeps upon the earth.

The defects of Claudian are those of a declining taste. But if it is considered, that when he wrote, the Latin language itself had lost its purity, that, though a resident in Italy, he

---

* See *Bib. Let. t.* II. † *Cours de Litter. t.* I. *p.* 273.

‡ *Storia della Letter. t.* II. *p.* 447.

was the native of a distant country, and that he had no living examples of a better taste before his eyes, he seems entitled to no common share of praise. In the compositions of Claudian, whatever may be his imperfections, the Latin muse was entombed with honour; and our tears may now be shed upon her urn.

The reader who may wish for a longer list, will turn to the characters, which are easily found, of Petronius Arbiter, of Seneca the philosopher and poet, of Apulius, of Olympius Nemesianus, of Julius Calpurnius, and of Decimus Ausonius, who lived at different periods of the same æra, and whose works, no less than those which I have cited, would serve to trace the declining progress of the art.

The Decline of History.

I would ask the reader, if he ever beheld an edifice of admirable workmanship, verging to decay, its roof opening to the rain, its columns shaken, its walls inclining, and the ivy forcing its way through the fissures—what were the emotions of his mind? Would they be very different from those, which he now feels, when passing rapidly from object to object, he discovers a decline in all, and which is more deplorable, inasmuch as the works of intellect may be deemed more precious than the works of art, and their decay is more extensively fatal to the best interests of man. When we trace the progress of society, from barbarism to civilization, from ignorance to knowledge, from rudeness to the arts of refinement, all is gay and cheering; and we are delighted by each feature of the scene. It is with a pleasure of this kind that we contemplate the progress of history from its first rude beginning till, proceeding through a series of writers, it attained

BOOK I. that fulness of excellence which distinguished the historian of the Roman people*.

In treating the decline of *History*, the Italian critic† thus feelingly opens the subject. "So calamitous and afflicting were the times on which we enter, that it were rather to have been wished, no remembrance of them had descended to posterity. But as the unhappy man finds comfort in revealing his sorrows, so, it seems, many Romans, having experienced the weight of distress, were anxious that it should not be unknown to their children's children." The history of the first Cæsars was the subject on which many wrote: others, from a higher date, traced the story of the Roman people: and others selected different themes. The number of these writers had not been exceeded in any age; but I fear we must be prepared, among many beauties, to notice in them faults similar to those which deformed the compositions of the orators and the poets. Their compositions discover a sententious stateliness, an affected precision, a superfluity of ornament, an involution of phrase, and an obscurity of diction, which will often baffle the most penetrating sagacity. Cicero has said, that "history amuses in whatever manner it be written." And so it does, provided it be such history as, we may presume, that he himself had read, in which the narration presents a simple but luminous statement of facts; and where the reflections of the writer, arising out of the subject, are neither unnecessarily nor affectedly introduced.

---

* *Titus Livius.* † *Tiraboschi, t.* II. *p.* 139.

With the names, the writings, and the character of the writings of those authors, who, in the historical department, served to enliven this declining period, every scholar is well acquainted. He knows that Velleius Paterculus, in the reign of Tiberius, wrote a history, chiefly of his own times, in which he basely flatters the tyrant and his infamous minister Sejanus; and that the style of that history, though often glittering with ornament, had lost the simple elegance which he had been taught to admire. He knows, that contemporary with Paterculus was Valerius Maximus, who compiled a work, in nine books, in which he describes many of the *sayings* and *actions* of memorable men. Of this work (not to mention the want of perspicacity in the selection of its materials) every page announces the corruption of the Latin idiom *. Suetonius, the friend of the younger Pliny, besides some works of less note, has left us the *Lives* of the Twelve Cæsars, a compilation, as it has been called, of secret anecdotes, which, if it instruct by the veracity, will disgust by the impurity of its details. It is not characterized by an affected brevity, so much as by a want of energy †. An abridgment of the Roman History, from the foundation of the city to the reign of Augustus, was written by Annæus Florus, in the time of Trajan, which is marked by the common defects of the age ‡.

Of some other writers on historical subjects, the names are recorded, but the works are lost. Quintilian remarks, that in history the Latin had shewn themselves not inferior to the

---

* *See Bib. Lat. t.* 1. † *Ibid.* ‡ *Ibid.*

BOOK I. Grecian writers; and he expatiates, in the warmest strain of panegyric, on the merits of Sallust and of Titus Livius, comparing the one with Thucydides, and the other with Herodotus: but as he approaches his own times, he mentions, besides Aufidius Bassus, only Servilius Novianus, a man of resplendent talents, but whose style was less compressed than the dignity of history required*. As we have not the works of Novianus, it is not possible to decide, what that *compression* was, the want of which he censures; but it is probable, that the critic had himself learned to admire the sententious brevity, which, forsaking the copious perspicuity of better days, had become the general taste.

Have I then forgotten Cornelius Tacitus, it will be asked: or do I mean to pass him over in silence? He has by no means escaped my recollection; nor shall I leave him unnoticed: but I thought, that if I selected him as a model of the historical taste of the age, its beauties and its blemishes would become more palpable and manifest.

Tacitus was the favourite of many emperors, or at least, they promoted him to the highest offices in the state. The younger Pliny was amongst his friends; and that elegant writer addressed several of his epistles to Tacitus. From the station which Tacitus occupied, he had means of access to accurate information, and his talents enabled him to select and record such events, characters, views of human nature, and motives of action, as offered themselves to his observation during the

* *Instit. l. x. c.* 1.

disastrous period of which he wrote. His works, mutilated and imperfect as we possess them, are comprised under *Annals*, from the death of Augustus to that of Nero: a *History*, beginning with the reign of Galba and ending with that of Domitian: a treatise on the *Manners of the Germans*: and the *Life of Agricola*. Of the *Annals* and *History* many entire books are lost *.

No author has more frequently engaged the comments and expositions of the learned; and none has been more frequently translated. His admirers, with an enthusiasm seldom equalled, have fancied that, without a single blemish, they discovered in him all the qualities which are required in a perfect historian. "He is accused," observes a sagacious critic †, "of having painted human nature in colours of too dark a tinge, that is, of having viewed her with too searching an eye. He is said to be obscure, which means, I believe, that he did not write for the multitude: and his style is by some deemed to be too rapid and too concise, as if to say much in few words were not the first quality of a writer." Another critic of the same nation‡, whose judgment I often admire, hesitates not to declare, that the diction of Tacitus has the energy of his soul; that it is singularly picturesque without being too figurative, precise without obscurity, and nervous

---

* See *Bib. Lat. t.* I.

† *D'Alembert. Melanges de Litterat.* who translated select passages of his admired author.

‡ *Laharpe Cours de Litterat. t.* III. *p.* 310.

BOOK I.

without inflation. He speaks, at the same time, to the affections, to the fancy, and to the understanding. Of the capacity of the reader, he observes, we may fairly judge by the opinion which he forms of Tacitus; for no one, who is not himself profound, can fathom the depth of his reflections. But the secret magic of his style arose from the circumstances of his life, as well as from the singular powers of his genius. He then adds—this virtuous man, whose eyes first opened on the horrors of the court of Nero; who then beheld the ignominy of Galba; the gluttony of Vitellius; and the rapine of Otho; was compelled, in a mature age, after he had breathed the milder air of the reigns of Vespasian and Titus, again to endure, and to endure in silence, the hypocritical and jealous tyranny of Domitian. His situation as well as the hopes of his family demanded, that he should not irritate the tyrant, but suppress his indignation, and weep in secret over the wounds of his country, and the blood of his fellow citizens. In these circumstances Tacitus, absorbed in his own reflections, developed in his historical compositions, the feelings of indignation which pressed for utterance; and this it is which has given to his style its interest and animation. His invective is not that of a declaimer: as he was too deeply affected to be declamatory; but he depicts in the full colours of life and truth whatever is odious in tyranny, or revolting in slavery; the hopes of the criminal, the fears of the innocent, and the dejection of the virtuous.

This eulogy is not void of truth; but the praise must be received with some abasement. I have read Tacitus, and I never read him without delight: but this delight is diminished by his occasional obscurity, which the sagacity of commentators has

not hitherto been able to dispel. But is this the manner in which history ought to be written? Whilst we are desirous of acquiring the knowledge of facts, and of discriminating the characters, the views and motives of the principal actors; can it be expedient that our progress should be suspended by diction, which is enveloped in the shades of mystery, or by a sort of enigmatical brevity, of which the meaning is a matter of conjecture rather than of certainty? I do not here speak of such passages, as time and ignorance have mutilated or corrupted, but of the text, when acknowledged to be genuine and entire. Of a Grecian painter, it was observed, *intelligitur plus semper quam pingitur*, "his meaning is much fuller than his expression:" in an art which is confined within local dimensions of such limited extent, the praise might be just. But there are no bounds to the field of history; and though all need not be said, yet nothing should be omitted, which can serve to illustrate character, to develop motives, or to give a clear insight into the causes and succession of events. The reader will recollect a passage in Quintilian, in which, describing the vicious taste of the age, he says, that it was thought by some, "true genius was then only shewn, when genius was necessary to investigate the sense." It was in this age that Tacitus wrote; and we need not hesitate to affirm, that he affected brevity and refinement in order to exhibit his acuteness; or, in other words, that Cornelius Tacitus, with all his excellencies, was sometimes not superior to his contemporaries; and that the style of his history exhibits undoubted proofs of the decline of taste.

The following character by a German author, now

BOOK I.

living*, is, I think, just:—"Tacitus," he says, "seems to have made Sallust his model, though in his manner of treating history, and in his general composition, he be himself original. He paints as a poet rather than as an historian, whilst he is more an orator than a poet; more a moralist, than an orator; and more than all, a statesman. Of a statesman he every-where assumes the reflections and the language. He surprises, and even astonishes; but addressing the imagination, and not the heart, he seldom moves. His ideas, besides, by a forced brevity of expression, are so pressed together, as to be involved in great obscurity; and the translator, to make a single line intelligible, is compelled to become a paraphrast."

Other objections have been made. It has been said, that, in all events, he professed to discover views which probably were not entertained, and designs which did not exist; that he seemed to imagine, that the ordinary course of nature and unpremeditated occurrences had no influence in human affairs; that his representations of character are depicted with too much elaborate artifice; and that the originals had no existence except in the imagination of the historian. On these objections, which are not unfounded, I shall not dwell; but I will beg leave to add, that, he occasionally neglected those sources of accurate information which were easily accessible, and had recourse to fable or surmise. I here allude chiefly to his account of the origin of the Jewish nation and

* *Meusel-Leitfaden zur Geschichte der Gelehrsamkeit* Zweit Abtheil. p 449

of its rites *, than which nothing can be less authentic, whilst the sacred books of the Jews were at that time everywhere open to inspection, and individuals of that nation were to be found in every city of the empire. But he despised that people, and was anxious to render their origin an object of contempt.

I will finally observe, that the insurmountable difficulties which the translators of Tacitus have universally experienced †, may be considered as a proof, that his originality, in whatever it consisted, was the offspring rather of affected refinement than of powerful genius, or profound thought. The French critic, whom I quoted, would reply, that this judgment was dictated by shallowness of intellect, and that no one should pronounce on the merits of Tacitus who is not animated by the spirit which pervades his compositions. Before I quit this subject I will however declare, that whatever intricacies or obscurities may perplex the reader of Tacitus, he will find the labour more than compensated by the beauties with which his works abound.

It is not agreed among the learned who Quintus Curtius was, or at what time he lived. His *History*, in ten books, of the exploits of Alexander, though replete with many beauties,

* *Hist. l.* v.

† I may mention, among the innumerable translations, the late one, in our language, by Mr. Murphy, which, certainly as an interesting narration, may be read with pleasure; but it is not Tacitus. The Italian Davanzati has attempted more; but he, it is said, is not intelligible.

BOOK I. does not, in the opinion of sober critics, entitle him to a place of high antiquity; and perhaps of this opinion no more convincing proof could be given, than that, in the thirteenth century, a Spanish king should have been so delighted with its perusal, as to have ascribed to it the recovery of his health. The genuine beauties of historical composition were not likely to have so powerfully allured the attention of a barbarous prince *. It has been thought rather a romance than a genuine history.

If we except Justin, though it be not accurately known when he flourished, and whose *abridgement* of general history is not greatly admired †, we have now a dreary chasm to pass till we come to the reign of Diocletian. At this period, or not long afterwards, we meet the authors of the *Historia Augusta*, which is a valuable collection, as it gives us the *lives* of the preceding Emperors, of whom we should otherwise have had no account. But the narration of these writers is sometimes confused and inaccurate, and it is vain to expect purity of diction or elegance of style. The authors of the *Historia Augusta* are generally supposed to be six, if there be not some mistake in the names, Ælius Spartianus, Julius Capitolinus, Ælius Lampridius, Vulcatius Gallicanus, Trebellius Pollio, and Flavius Vopiscus ‡.

After Constantine, and during the reigns of his successors,

* See *Bib. Lat. t.* I. *Storia della Letter. t.* II. *p.* 144—154.

† *Bib. Lat. t.* II. ‡ *Ibid.*

we seek in vain for an historian to show us, who were the people, often conquerors and sometimes conquered, that, from all sides, precipitated themselves upon the empire; whence they came, and what were their laws, manners, and customs; what were the real characters of the Emperors, and their ministers, or of such individuals as served to augment or to mitigate the evils of the period *. No such historian is found. Aurelius Victor, indeed, who lived about the middle of the fourth century, has written the *Lives* of the Emperors, from Augustus to Constantius; and his contemporary Eutropius has furnished an epitome of Roman History, from its origin to a somewhat later era †: but Ammianus Marcellinus becomes the principal object of our attention.

Ammianus Marcellinus was by birth a Greek, and from the city of Antioch; but he resided many years in Rome, where he was greatly admired, and where he wrote his *History* in the Latin language. It commenced with the reign of Nerva, and ended with that of Valens in the year 378. It originally consisted of thirty-one books, of which thirteen have perished. It is generally agreed, that solid truth, and accurate discernment are to be found in Ammianus; but his style is rugged and inharmonious. This may be pardoned in a Greek and a soldier; but his useless digressions, which are evidently designed to display his learning, weary and disgust. The declamatory manner also, in which he relates the most ordinary incidents, is contrary to that sober dignity which History should maintain; but it is

---

* *Storia della Letterat. t.* II. *p.* 456. † *Bib. Lat. t.* II.

BOOK I.

known, that he composed his work for public recitation, and that his readings were attended and applauded*. The applause at once proves, if any proof were wanting, that the orator and his audience were equally void of taste. His knowledge of Geography merits commendation.

But I must not omit Paulus Orosius, a Spaniard, and the author of a *History* in seven books, written with a view to repel the charge of the Gentiles, that the calamities, which the Empire at that time endured, arose from the establishment of Christianity. He shews, that wars, insurrections, and feuds, had at all times caused the miseries of the human race. Orosius lived early in the fifth century, and was known to St. Jerom and the African bishop St. Augustin, at whose recommendation he wrote his History. His works contain some useful information, but it is deformed by his chronological negligence, and his puerile credulity. This was, perhaps, what gave it a peculiar relish amongst the scholars, if I may so call them, of the Middle Ages, when the History of Orosius was very generally read, and made the model of their chronicles.

The Decline of Philosophy, &c.

If the studies best adapted, by their influence on the affections of the mind, to command attention, could not resist the causes of decline, it will be idle to look for stability in graver and less attractive pursuits. Among the Romans, observes an author whom I have before quoted †, philosophy had few ad-

* *Hadrian. Vales. Pref. ad Amm. Marcel. Bib. Lat. t.* II.

† *Meusels Leitfaden, p.* 479.

mirers, and these few were contented to imitate their Greek masters, amuse themselves with sophisms and flowery declamations, subversive at once of taste, and unproductive of any moral benefit. Some of them wrote in Greek; but their language was often so ill-adapted to common apprehension, and the maxims of their pretended wisdom so unattainable, that they seemed to aspire to nothing beyond the merit of singularity. While the severer lessons of the Stoic school had some followers, those of Epicurus had more; and the follies of magic, of astrology, and of demonology, were by no means destitute of votaries.

Rising from the perusal of the works of Cicero, whose taste and eloquence could diffuse a charm over the severest subjects, we are ill prepared to relish the pages of Seneca, whose moral maxims, indeed, are often admirable, and whose knowledge was vast, but whose inflated idiom and unnatural conceits, served principally to vitiate the writers of the age. He was the preceptor of Nero, and died by his command*.

The *Natural History* of Pliny is still read with pleasure. It is an immense compilation extracted from more than two thousand authors, Greek and Latin, and containing all the knowledge of nature and of human inventions which was possessed in his time. The style is often highly decorated; but it is wanting in the purity and simplicity of better days. His nephew has left us an interesting account of his studies,

* *Tacit. Annal. l.* xv. *c.* 60, *etc.*—*See Bib. Lat. t.* 1.

BOOK II. and of the manner of his death, in the year 79, during the tremendous eruption of Vesuvius, which laid an extensive country in ruins, and overwhelmed many populous cities*.

Of other philosophers we know little more than the praises which they received from the historians, and the persecutions which they underwent from the emperors, who were sometimes jealous of their virtues, but more often of the insight into futurity which they were supposed to possess. Hence they were confounded with the astrologers, who were then so numerous and so celebrated. The philosophy which was principally adopted, was that of the Stoic school. It was preferred for the severity of its maxims; and every pretender to wisdom deemed it necessary to bear the evils of life with firmness, or to liberate himself from their pressure by a voluntary death. That many so suffered and so died, we know from the most authentic statements †.

But neither this weighty consideration, nor the contagious pages of Seneca, nor, what was more alluring, the examples and encouragement of the philosophic Emperors who, during many years of the second century, filled the throne, could attract many to drink at the fountain of science or philosophy. The Greeks, indeed, in Rome itself, and more in their favourite cities of learning, seemed anxious to bring back the days of Pythagoras and of Plato. But among the

* *Epist. l.* III. *ep.* 5, *l.* VI. *ep.* 16, 20.—*See Bib. Lat. t.* I.

† See *Tacitus, Suetonius, and other historians.*

Latins there was nothing but a sort of intellectual languor or decrepitude.

What has once become extinct cannot easily be revived; and when Constantine, agreeably to the principles of the soundest policy, granted liberty to the professors of the new religion, its maxims induced many to contemn the pursuits of what they deemed a vain science, whilst others found ample exercise for their talents, in the defence of their faith against the attacks of those powerful adversaries, whom the schools of Greece principally supplied to wage the war of words.

But whatever were the causes of the decline of the study of philosophy, it is certain that the names of but few of its votaries have been transmitted to us, and much fewer are their writings, from the reign of Adrian to the fall of the western empire*.

The subject of jurisprudence is but remotely connected with that of literature; or it would otherwise be easy to shew, how inevitable was its decline, when the lives and properties of the citizen depended no longer on the law or its most able expositions; but on the arbitrary will of an individual. Nor shall I dwell much on the *Grammarians*, as they were denominated, or the *Philologists*, or the professors of *Rhetoric*, as the latter, however numerous, must have followed the decline

* On this subject may be read with great profit the profound work of the German Brucker, *Historia Critica Philosophiæ*, t. II. c. I, 2.

BOOK I. of eloquence, which they contributed to accelerate. Privileges, honours, and stipends were not wanting; but the principle of taste was extinct*. Perhaps Aulus Gellius should be excepted from the herd. He was the author of the *Noctes Atticæ*, in twenty books; and is by some thought to have lived in the reign of Adrian; though others assign his existence to a later period. The critics, as usual, are divided on the merits of this work; but however defective its style may be, or trifling the points on which it sometimes dwells, it contains much information relative to the history, chronology, the manners, and the laws of ancient times, which we should elsewhere seek in vain†.

Among the early *Philologists* were reckoned Asconius Pedanus, of whom some fragments remain; Fannius Palæmon, who wrote an abridgment of grammar, and Valerius Probus, who revised the text of Virgil and of Terence. These were succeeded by Censorinus, the celebrated Ælius Donatus, by Nonius Marcellus and Mallius Theodorus, names not unknown to the lovers of accurate diction in the Latin tongue. The labours of such men became gradually more and more requisite, in proportion as the Greek language acquired a general preference and a variety of other causes tended to debase the former purity of the Latin tongue.

* See all these subjects treated with his usual sagacity by Tiraboschi, *Storia della Letterat. t.* II.

† *See Bib. Lat. t.* II.

The State of the Libraries.

From literature in its various branches, the decline of which we have thus rapidly traced, our attention is naturally directed to the *Libraries*. Where these are numerous and well-selected, the means, at least, of acquiring knowledge will not be wanting; but these means and their application must still be usually coincident. The ancient Romans, almost solely intent on military conquest, had long neglected, as beneath their notice, the pursuits of literature; and it was not before the year of Rome, 667, when Athens was taken by Cornelius Sylla, that a library was formed from the spoils of that seat of the Muses*. But had the Muses really excited the admiration of the proud conqueror, or was it not rather ostentation which incited Sylla to collect a treasure which, in any other view, had little value in his eyes? We next read of the library of the munificent Lucullus; and of that of Atticus, the friend of Cicero†, to which must be added that of Cicero himself, and of his brother Quintus. These were private collections, composed of Greek and Latin authors, but they were open to the inspection of the studious. Julius Cæsar, who was distinguished by his literary attainments as much as his military talents, is related‡, amongst his various plans for the benefit of Rome and of the Roman world, to have cherished the design of erecting public libraries.

What Cæsar designed, but his death prevented, a private citizen first achieved. This citizen was Asinius Pollio, to

---

* *Idem in vita Lucul. Corn. Nepos.* † *Plutarch. in vita Syllæ.*

‡ *Suet. in Jul. Cæsar, c. 44.*

BOOK I.

whom the corruption of eloquence has been ascribed; but who was himself learned, and the protector of learning. Actuated by a noble ambition, he devoted the spoils of war to the purposes of science, and built a spacious hall adjoining to the Temple of Liberty, which he stored with Greek and Latin books*.

The example was followed by Augustus, who formed two libraries, one on the Palatine hill, near the temple of Apollo, which he had himself raised; and the other in the portico of the palace of his sister Octavia†.

But these edifices, and one for the same purpose, erected by Tiberius, together with their invaluable contents, were afterwards destroyed by the two fires which, under Nero and Titus, threatened to lay the eternal city itself in ruins‡. When the copies of works, which were all written by the hand, were few, and those confined chiefly within the walls of Rome (I except the productions of Greece), it is not possible to calculate the extent of the loss. The tyrant Domitian, however, seriously attempted to repair it by collecting other copies, and employing transcribers whom he sent to Alexandria, at that time celebrated for its numerous scholars and its literary stores§.

The private libraries in the meantime were multiplied

---

* *Plin. Sen. l.* xxxv. *c.* 11.

† *Suet. et Plutarch. in August.*

‡ *Suet. in Ner. et Tit.*

§ *Id. in Domit. c.* 20.

among the pretenders to literature*; and as luxury increased, books were purchased as an appendage of wealth, or as an embellishment, which was supposed to shew the taste of their possessor. The austere Seneca does not spare his censure against this vain parade†; but he might have known that it merited some praise as it circulated copies, and increased the facilities of acquiring information.

Another fire under Commodus ‡ destroyed the magnificent Temple of Peace, and with it the annexed library. From this period the paucity of historians occasions the dearth of intelligence, or the confusion that ensued. The general depravation of manners suspended all attention to literary objects, and induced indifference to their fate; and we read little more of libraries, either public or private. The inroads of barbarous armies accomplished what remained. At their approach science fled; devastation and pillage destroyed or dissipated what few, compared with life and the means of subsistence, could be solicitous to preserve.

The Decline of the Polite Arts.

This reflection naturally impels our attention to the state of the *liberal arts* ‖, which must have felt the operation of those causes which ultimately proved so fatal to letters.

---

* See *the Epistles of Pliny.*

† *Senec. de Tranquil.* c. IX.

‡ *Herodian, l.* 1. *c.* 44.

‖ I shall follow in this concise review of the arts the Statements of Winkelmann, in the Italian edition of his *Storia delle arti del Disegno, t.* II.—Also Spence in his Polymetis.

BOOK I.

At an early period, when in Etruria, in Magna Græcia, and in Sicily, the arts had been advanced to a high degree of perfection, Rome was intent on other objects; and the taste which she afterwards seemed to have acquired was easily satisfied. Foreign artists were ready to exhibit specimens of their skill; and a series of conquests, which laid city after city, and nation after nation, at her feet, soon opened to the rapacity of her generals all the monuments of the arts, which had served to embellish the temples of their gods and the palaces of their princes. The number of statues and of other costly and admired works, which from all quarters were imported into Italy, exceeds belief. The view of them might, and in some did excite the desire of imitation; but it would doubtless cause in more a wish to add to their stores by further spoliation. Why have recourse to the slow labour of the chisel, when neither curiosity nor luxury had a wish, which the sword could not more readily gratify?

As Greece had been the principal school of the arts, and the repository of their productions, the Roman robbers, when they had acquired a taste for the productions of sculpture or painting, looked to Greece for the accomplishment of their desires. That envied country was every where stripped of its most estimable ornaments. In the hundred and fifty-sixth Olympiad, and about the six hundred and seventh year of Rome, we may follow Lucius Mummius to Corinth, when that city was destroyed; but its most precious treasure of statues and pictures was preserved. These he resolved to transmit to Rome; but the orders which he issued on the occasion are not a little curious. If any of these spoils, he observed, to those who had the care of them, be lost or injured,

you shall repair or replace them at your own expense*. Mummius entered Rome in triumph; when the citizens, for the first time, beheld with astonishment the specimens of Grecian taste †.

When luxury, more destructive than steel, had revenged on Rome herself the cause of general liberty ‡, that is, when the Cæsars began to reign, did the arts, under their protection, arrive at superior excellence? If we believe Virgil, they were still in other hands; the Greeks were still unrivalled in the arts. The Romans had higher calls. It was well, however, in one sense, for their city, and for other parts of the empire, that aqueducts, porticoes, palaces, theatres, and temples were not so portable, as the smaller productions of the statuary and the painter. By contemplating the beautiful models of Greece, the Romans imbibed that taste, which they exerted in the erection of edifices, commensurate with the greatness of the Roman name. But even architecture, soon declined with the other arts, and similar causes, accelerated its fall.

Under the immediate successors of Augustus, occasional

---

* Vell. Paterc. l. 1. c. 13.

† This is not true. * Long before this, by the taking of Syracuse, and again by the conquest of Macedon, Rome had been enriched by the choicest spoils. See Livy passim.

Winkelmann Storia delle Arti, t. II.

‡ sævior armis
Luxuria incubuit, victumque ulciscitur orbem.
Juvenal. Satyr. VI.

BOOK I. patronage inspired life into the arts; and it is not without some astonishment that we view the extravagance which Nero displayed in their cause. His taste, which he probably acquired from his master Seneca, may well be impeached when it led him to command the bronze statue of Alexander by Lisippus to be washed with gold, or when he directed a colossal statue of himself, a hundred and ten feet high, to be cast by Zenodorus; but Rome was indebted to him for a fresh importation from Greece. Under a specious pretence of restoring liberty, his delegates were admitted into the Grecian cities, which they robbed of what pleased them best; and, from the single temple of Delphi, which already had been ten times spoiled, they conveyed into Italy five hundred statues. Among these are thought to have been the Apollo of Belvidere and the supposed Gladiator*.

While Rome continued to be ornamented with these new spoils, other works of great magnificence were added, particularly by Trajan; whose reign infused fresh vigour into every pursuit; and the Romans appear to have acquired skill in the execution, if not in the design, of these works. But, when Adrian, the friend of Greece, and the patron of the arts, was no more, we have to lament their visible decline. Many artists were formed in his school, and their talents were still employed under the Antonines. But the natural bent of these Emperors was to other pursuits. Their attention was more par-

* In speaking of the Apollo, the mind of Winkelmann seems to feel the enthusiasm that animated its artist. T. II. p. 285, of the Italian edition.

ticularly engaged by the sophists; who could see nothing that was excellent in the forms of matter, compared with the objects of intellectual abstraction and metaphysical subtlety. The encouragement which the Antonines gave to the arts was, as Winckelmann remarks, only that apparent reviviscence which is the precursor of death. Under the brutal Commodus, the arts, which the school of Adrian had nourished, sunk, like a river which is lost in the earth, to be seen no more, but at a distance too remote for observation.

The Italian writers acknowledge* the decay, but not the extinction of the arts; and they produce instances of works, the remains of which are contemplated with admiration. This, in the department of architecture often cannot be reasonably denied.

The State of Literature in Italy, and in the distant Provinces.

You have told us, may the reader say, what, during the lapse of many years, was the state of literature and of the arts in Rome: but what was it in the other cities of Italy; and in the remoter provinces? But perhaps when the state of the arts in such a capital as Rome confessedly was, has been sufficiently delineated, no additional details can be requisite. Rome was the central resort from all parts of the empire, of all who were anxious to improve their fortune or gratify their ambition. In the language of Seneca, Rome was the *Patria* of the world. Perceiving the list of those, many of whom I have mentioned, who by their works or their

* See Tiraboschi, t. II. p. 480.

BOOK I.

talents illustrated the west, we find an ample supply from Gaul, from Spain, from Africa; while the cities of Greece and of Asia Minor, vied with each other in literary pursuits.

As long as Rome continued to be the seat of empire, the means of acquiring knowledge, and the incitements to the attainment were, in a great measure, confined within her walls. The migration to Byzantium among all its evils, was, therefore, productive of some good; as, from this period, Rome ceased to be the constant residence of the western Emperors, and the temptation to resort to that city no longer retained its former force.

That the cities of Magna Græcia and of Sicily, now the kingdom of Naples, retained their love of letters, in which, during so long, and from so early a period, they had acquired fame, is not disputed*. And, from the remains of theatres and other monuments of art, the Italians willingly infer, that their ancestors, in almost every city, possessed some portion of elegant taste. They dwell with pleasure on the patriotism of the younger Pliny, who nobly contributed to establish a public school in his native city of Como, and to open a library, on which occasion he delivered an oration before the magistrates†. Before this time, Milan had been celebrated for its schools, to which we are told that many repaired from the neighbouring countries, and surely some literary ardour

* See *Storia della Letterat. t.* 1.—*Also Winkelmann, t.* 1.

† *Ep. l.* vii. *ep.* 13.—*l.* i. *ep.* 8.—*l.* ii. *ep.* 5.

must have been felt, where Virgil first saw the light and first thrilled with the inspirations of the muse*. But in such researches there is much uncertainty; for though modern Italy can number an historian almost for every city, antiquity has left few to whose sentiments we can recur.

In the remoter provinces of the empire, where Roman colonies were established, and the legions were often stationed, no encouragement to liberal pursuits was withheld; and we still admire the vestiges of the stupendous monuments which were there erected. As long as these were contemplated, no mind could well remain insensible to the powers of the intellect by which they were planned, nor to the skill by which they were executed. Hence some sensations of taste would be excited or preserved. In the more favoured cities of Africa, Spain, and Gaul, schools were opened and endowed. In these the Latin and Greek languages were taught, and Rome was indebted to them for some of her first orators, historians, and poets. The two Senecas, Lucan, Martial, and Quintilian, were natives of Spain; Petronius Arbiter, Ausonius, Sidonius Apollinaris, and the orators Julius Florus and Julius Secundus, so highly praised by Quintilian, came from Gaul; and Africa sent Lucius Apulius, Arnobius, and Aurelius Victor, to adorn the literature of the capital.

Let one example suffice of the manner in which these cities were patronized and ennobled. Lyons, far less ancient than

* See *on this general subject Tiraboschi. t.* II. *l. iii.*

BOOK I. many other cities in its neighbourhood, which the Romans, or the Greeks, or the Gauls had founded, was built, by an order of the senate, soon after the death of Cæsar. The disaffected legions under Plancus were employed in the work; a Roman colony was soon introduced; and the soil was covered by aqueducts, baths, and theatres. This city became the metropolis of Celtic Gaul. In order more effectually to check the incursions of some barbarous people, Augustus repaired thither, and during a residence of three years, continued to add to its embellishments. Caligula after this visited Lyons, and, in the temple which had been erected in honour of Augustus, he appointed games to be celebrated, and literary contests of Greek and Latin eloquence to be exhibited. Finally, his successor Claudius, by a decree of the senate, obtained for this favourite city, in which he is said to have been born, all the privileges of a Roman colony, that is, the privileges of Roman citizenship. The century of its foundation was the century of its greatest splendour; but this century was scarcely completed, when Lyons, by a sudden fire, was reduced to ashes.

Lyons was afterwards rebuilt; and we read that the prince Domitian made it the place of his retreat, in order, as he pretended, to improve his mind by the study of eloquence, and the muses *. The munificence of Trajan was extended to Lyons, and it experienced the liberalities of Adrian.

The literary taste of this city soon became celebrated; for

* Tacit. Hist. l. iv.

we find Pliny expressing his joy, that his works were much admired at Lyons*. Its municipal schools were frequented; and in the fourth century, when Rome was in want of a professor, Lyons could furnish the Orator Palladius†. In the Theodosian code‡ a law may be read, addressed by Gratian to the prefect of Gaul, which shews, what attention was paid to the literary prosperity of the provinces. It enacts, that the ablest men, in Greek and Latin letters, shall be chosen to teach in all the metropolitan cities; and it appoints their salaries. On this it may be remarked, that the Greek language was then every-where taught, and that oratory, poetry, and grammar (which are particularly mentioned), were the studies, which were most encouraged. Of persons, eminent in these studies, a list is supplied by the historians of Lyons; but we may infer the vitiation of their taste from a letter of one of their bishops to St. Ambrose of Milan, in which he complains that, in their fastidious squeamishness they despised the simplicity of the scriptures, as not written according to the rules of classical composition.

In the fifth century, after various disasters, Lyons fell into the hands of the Burgundian Vandals; but it could then

* *Ep. l.* IX. *ep.* 11.

† Of this Palladius an epigram is extant, not void of wit, written on the occasion of a copy of the Iliad being eaten by an ass:

Carminis Iliaci libros consumpsit asellus:
Hoc fatum Troja est, aut equus, aut asinus.

‡ *Cod. Theod. lex.* XI.

BOOK I.

boast of numbering Sidonius Apollinaris among its citizens. The virtues and the talents of Sidonius Apollinaris caused him to be deemed the ornament of the age. He had studied the exact sciences, and was versed in jurisprudence; but the charms of poetry seduced him from graver pursuits; and it is curious to read the addresses which, in the form of panegyrics, he pronounced before three successive Emperors; the first of which was recompensed by a statue crowned with laurel; whilst the second obtained signal favours for his native city; and for the third he was honoured with the government of Rome. The first and last were spoken in this city, the second in Lyons. The muse of Sidonius was sometimes grave, and often playful; but of his poems it has been remarked, that they are not recommended so much by their classical purity, or the harmony of their versification, as by accounts of peculiar usages, interesting facts, personal characters, and amusing anecdotes. Sidonius Apollinaris had spent forty-two years in honourable ease, when he was unexpectedly called to the see of Auvergne, since named Clermont. It was not without reluctance that he obeyed this call; and turning his back on his wife and on the Muses, he took orders, and devoted the remainder of his days to the studies best becoming his new station and the duties of an episcopal life. He died about the year 482*.

Lyons, I have said, was peculiarly favoured; but the

* The *Histoire litteraire de la ville de Lyon*, by Colonia, has supplied me with this account of its origin and splendid state. On Sidonius, see Bib. Lat. t. II. and Cave Hist. Lit.

history of other cities, as of Marseilles, Bourdeaux, Toulouse, would shew, that they were not destitute of patronage, nor of the opportunities of improvement, which public schools and able professors could supply. But when the western empire fell, the state of literature and of the arts in the provinces was assimilated in its destiny to that in the capital; though in the provinces the causes of decline were more sudden and rapid in their operation.

The Causes of the Decline of Literature and of the Arts.

Enough has perhaps already been incidentally said, to point out what these causes were. In speaking of the decline of eloquence, I neglected to mention a work, written expressly on the subject, in the reign of Vespasian, though who was the author is not agreed among the learned*. In this dialogue the interlocutors discuss the point with much animation, and in a style more easy and unaffected than was usual in that period. The cause of the moderns is maintained with ability; but we soon discover to which side the claim of superiority is to be adjudged. Having premised, that the eloquence of the ancients was "manly, sound, and vigorous," Messala, the speaker, proceeds to describe the orators of the day: "The most homely dress," he says "is preferable to gawdy colours, and meretricious ornaments. The style in vogue, at present, is an innovation against every thing which is just and natural. It is not even manly. The luxuriance of phrase, the inanity of tuneful periods, and the

* *De Oratoribus, sive de causis corruptæ eloquentiæ*, ascribed by some to Tacitus, by others to Quintilian, and to be found generally appended to the works of both.

wanton levity of the whole composition, are fit for nothing but the histrionic art, and appear as if they were written for the stage. To the disgrace of the times, however astonishing it may appear, it is the boast, the pride, the glory of our present orators, that their periods are musical enough either for the dancer's heel, or the warbler's throat." Then what causes, it is asked, for it cannot be a dearth of men, nor a decay of talents, have produced these fatal effects, not in eloquence alone, but in the rest of the polite arts, which, it is plain, have lost their former lustre? "The causes of this decay," says Messala, "are not difficult to be traced: they are—the dissipation of our young men, the inattention of parents, the ignorance of those who pretend to give instruction, and the total neglect of ancient discipline. The mischief began at Rome; it has over-run all Italy: and is now, with rapid strides, spreading through the provinces." He dwells on each of these topics, after having previously stated what, in former times, from the cradle to manhood, was the system of education, and particularly of those designed for the bar.

Eloquence, he afterward observes, must flourish most, "under a bold and turbulent democracy;" and he adds, that the change in the form of government, the honours which formerly attended oratory, the magnitude of the causes brought before the people, in one word, the whole system of more free, but of more tempestuous times, must be taken into the account, in order to obtain a full solution of the question. The speaker, who, in this part of the dialogue, is Maternus, thus concludes: "My friends, had it been your lot to have lived under the old republic; and the men, whom we so

much admire, had been reserved for the present age; if some god had changed the period of their and of your existence, the flame of genius had been yours, and the chiefs of antiquity would now be acting with minds subdued to the temper of the times*."

Nothing can be more just than the above observation; and I have no doubt that the causes assigned for the decay of eloquence, were satisfactory: but will they account, as is insinuated, for the decline of other arts? It has not seemed so to more modern reasoners, who have accumulated cause upon cause, without solving the problem. They talk of the patronage of princes, without which the incitements to great exertions fail; and of the undisturbed tranquillity, which the habits of retirement demand: they add, a dissoluteness of general morals, and that restraint which is imposed by the forms of arbitrary government. These are moral causes; while others have recourse to those of a physical nature, such as climate, temperature of the air, and even noxious exhalations. That a combination of all these causes would have a powerful influence, cannot be denied: but each separately would not be adequate to the effect in question, and they did not exist in combination.

To urge as a cause of the decay of literature, a failure in natural talents, seems absurd; but if these talents, however vigorous in their native character, be not properly cultivated, or, if cultivated, be not directed by a just taste, agreeably to

* Mr. Murphy's Translation of this *Dialogue* is excellent.

BOOK I.

the most approved models of excellence, a proportionate falling off, in whatever may be attempted, must necessarily ensue. This argument has been already advanced; and, if applied to the circumstances of the times through which we have passed, it will, in a great measure, account for the general effect. Encouragement was given; and the study of each art was not neglected; but no advances to perfection were made. Decline rapidly succeeded to decline, till the fall was accomplished. If to the bad use, which the artists made of the means which lay before them, we join the temporary incursions, and final settlements, of the barbarous nations, what more can be required, unless it be the fluctuation to which all human concerns are subject? We know the progress of art, observes a learned foreigner *, in every age and country. Rude at first, it proceeds from low beginnings, and goes on improving, till it reaches the highest perfection of which human skill seems susceptible. But, at that point it is never stationary: it soon declines, and from the corruption of what is good, it is not in the nature of man to rise again to the same degree of excellence.

I must request, that the reader will attend to the following very just observations. "It might naturally be supposed," remarks the author †, whose words I quote, "when standards of excellence were universally acknowledged and admired in

---

* Brotier, the learned editor of Tacitus, who to fill up an unfortunate chasm in the *Dialogue*, has added a supplement, marked by much taste and judgment.

† *Analytical Inquiry into the Principles of Taste*, by R. P. Knight, p. 426.

every art; in poetry and elocution; in painting and sculpture; that the style and manner at least of those standards would be universally followed; and that the wit and ingenuity of man would be employed only in adding the utmost refinements of execution to that, which admitted of no improvements from invention. But this is not the case: on the contrary, *ita comparatum est humanum ingenium, ut optimarum rerum satietate defatigetur; unde fit, artes necessitatis vi crescere, aut decrescere semper, & ad fastigium evectas, ibi non posse consistere.* Perfection in taste and style has no sooner been reached, than it has been abandoned, even by those, who not only professed the warmest, but felt the sincerest admiration for the models which they forsook. The style of Virgil and Horace in poetry, and that of Cæsar and Cicero in prose, continued to be admired and applauded through all the succeeding ages of Roman eloquence, as the true standards of taste and eloquence in writing. Yet no one attempted to imitate them. All writers seek for applause; and applause is gained only by novelty. The style of Cicero and Virgil was new in the Latin language, when they wrote; but, in the age of Seneca and Lucan, it was no longer so; and though it still imposed by the stamp of authority, it could not even please without it; so that living writers, whose names depended on their works, and not their works upon their names, were obliged to seek for other means of exciting public attention, and acquiring public approbation. In the succeeding age, the refinements of these writers became old and insipid; and those of Statius and Tacitus were successfully employed to gratify the restless pruriency of innovation. In all other ages and countries, where letters have been successfully cultivated, the progression has been nearly the same."

BOOK I.

I might add, I believe, that other causes contributed much to vitiate the purity of the Latin language, that is, the countenance given to learned foreigners from the provinces, and the fashion of teaching Greek to the children in their earliest infancy. Of this the author of the *dialogue* complains: "The infant," he says, "is intrusted to a Greek chambermaid," and we have abundant proof of the partiality which has always been entertained for that enchanting language and its professors. Had this been adopted with a view of perusing those models of classical excellence, which formed the taste of Cicero and his contemporaries, the age might have continued to experience the good effects; but the practice at this time appears to have been upheld only by vanity or affectation. The purity of the native tongue, was, in the mean time, corrupted by the commixture of two different idioms.

The same, but more vitiating, effects happened from the intercourse with provincial strangers. These brought with them the peculiarities of their respective dialects, which could not fail, more or less to affect the substance, structure, or combinations of an acquired speech. New words and phrases would be introduced till the whole tissue of the language would experience a visible change.

And if in the best age of the Roman language, the style of Livy could justly be charged with *Patavinity;* what might not be expected when the Senecas and other provincial writers, by their brilliant conceits and their alluring defects had formed a new school, and given new force to the vitiation of public taste?

Was Literature affected by the Establishment of Christianity?

In enumerating these various causes, I must not omit the new religion, which, as it was undermining the whole system of heathenish worship, so intimately interwoven with all the concerns of domestic and public life, may be thought in no small degree to have affected literature and the arts. Some branches of philosophy, and particularly poetry, of which so large a part had a reference to the mythological fictions of the established worship, could not well be separated, it was supposed from the cause which it was calculated to support. And the arts of painting and sculpture were, it must be allowed, principally engaged in works immediately connected with the worship of the gods. But was the fact really such, as, on a superficial view, might be apprehended?

If we consider the state of Christianity as it was during the three first hundred years after its promulgation, we shall find that the church was assailed by the learned, ridiculed by the witty, opposed by the powerful, and on all sides oppressed and persecuted. Yet it grew, and might be said to prosper; and out of the numbers, of all ranks, that continued to be added to the faithful, we may fairly calculate, that not a few under the awful impressions of their new calling were drawn away from their former pursuits, whether of ambition, of interest, or of literature. The schools of human learning would, from obvious motives, often be deserted by the disciples of Christ, as they and their children had other lessons to learn, and other doctrines to imbibe. But when we look to the list* of learned Christians, particularly among the Greeks, who during those three centuries; and, among the Latins to

* See the *Historia Literaria* of Cave.

BOOK I.

Minucius Felix, Tertullian, and Lactantius; I think, it may, with truth, be said, that, at the head of the former, the great Origen was surpassed by none of his contemporaries; and that the latter, even in the beauties of style, were equalled by few. To the apologists of the new religion, if we would be just, we must chiefly confine our observations, when the question becomes one of literary merit; for these only had subjects before them, which called for the research of learning, and the display of eloquence. The writings of the three Latins are not exempt from defects; but they are evidently those of the age; and as to Tertullian, his style is truly African, but still occasionally displaying a majesty or a copiousness which is often calculated to impress, or to delight.*

If these men and many other converts to Christianity adopted a new faith, they did not always quit their former professions, and much less that temper of mind which becomes habitual. When, therefore, inclination or the interest of their profession demanded their talents, they would come forward with the same ardour, the same love of victory, and the same ambition to excel, as might previously have animated their exertions.

It is only then, it appears, from the new turn that was given to many minds; from the aversion strongly instilled of every thing connected with heathenish worship; and from the diminution that would necessarily follow, in the number of those who might have frequented the public schools, that the

* On these and other ecclesiastical writers, see Cave, Dupin Bib. Eccles. Fleury, Tillemont, etc.

cause of *profane* literature could be injured by the introduction of Christianity. But philosophy would still feel an interest in inquiries after truth; injured rights and insulted virtue would demand the aid of oratory; the varied events of the times would present materials for history; and from poetry nature would not cease to claim the embellishments of her art. The question then is not, whether the prevalence of the christian system might not, in some cases, give another direction to human pursuits; but whether it contributed to vitiate the literary taste of the age, and to hasten its decline.

Had this corruption of taste or its decline kept pace with the progress of the new religion, the argument would have been more than plausible; but, as we have seen, the decline had commenced before the Christian era began, and before any possible effect could have been produced by a change in the modes of faith or the ceremonials of worship. Then why should we attempt to conjure up an influence, which, at one time, is evidently fanciful, and, during three hundred years, is afterward uncertain in its operation, when we are in the possession of causes, which, as the heathen writers themselves confess, were fully adequate to the effects?

The same reasoning will not apply from the days of Constantine to the fall of the western empire, a period of an hundred and sixty-three years; as the Christian cause, nourished by the warm influence of the court, was then every-where prevalent. But literature had no grounds for complaint. "From this time," observes an eminent modern writer,* "the Christians

* Mosheim, *Eccles. Hist.* vol. i. p. 345, Eng. Ed.

BOOK I. applied themselves with more zeal and diligence to the study of philosophy and of the liberal arts. The emperors encouraged this taste for learning, and left no means unemployed to excite and maintain a spirit of literary emulation among the professors of Christianity. For this purpose, schools were established in many cities. Libraries were also erected, and men of learning and genius were nobly recompensed by the honours and advantages that were attached to the culture of the sciences and arts." And when we examine the works, among the Latins, of some eminent writers, such as those of Ambrose of Milan, of Jerom, of Sulpicius Severus, of Augustine, and of the Roman Leo, he must be deficient in equity, who comparing them, by the admitted rules of composition, with the most applauded productions of their heathen contemporaries, hesitates in pronouncing his opinion. Erasmus, indeed, may seem to indulge an extravagant panegyric, when in speaking of the writings of St. Jerom, he says: "Not only has he left all christian writers far behind him; he even contests the palm with Cicero. As to myself, I candidly own, that when I compare them, there appears to me something wanting in the reputed prince of eloquence. Such is the variety in Jerom, such the depth of his judgment, such the volubility of his conceptions."

If we place Sulpicius Severus by the side of the six authors of the *Augustan History* and of Ammianus Marcellinus it will not be difficult to determine which amongst them is most remarkable for perspicuity, for purity, and for elegance. The work of Severus is a sacred history from the beginning of the world to the year 400; and in biography, his Life of St. Martin of Tours may be read with pleasure. Of St. Augustine,

bishop of Hippo, I will barely observe, that greater and more shining talents were never united in one character; though we may lament, that he was an African. Hence proceeded that involution and prolixity, that affectation and conceit of phrase, which often exhaust the patience* and excite disgust.

When we turn back to the studies of these men, and view the schools which they frequented; the cities which they illustrated by their lectures; the countries through which they travelled in quest of science; the numerous works which proceeded from their pens; the general ardour by which all their pursuits were animated, and which seemed only to relax as the current of life ceased to flow,—we shall learn, that the Christians of this period were not negligent of the various branches of science; that literature was even indebted to their exertions; and that the blemishes by which their writings are disfigured, originated from those causes, which have been already sufficiently explained.

Speaking of the Christian writers of these ages, a modern critic †, confidently asserts, that they exhibit a more elegant style, and a less vitiated taste, than their Gentile contemporaries; and he ingeniously accounts for the superiority. When an author, says he, has a subject before him, which is interesting to his feelings, and is attractive by its novelty, he will write with force, whilst he will avoid that languor and affecta-

* See on the History of these men Cave's *Historia*, Tillemont, Dupin, etc.

† Denina. Vicende della Lett. l. i. c. xxxv.

BOOK I.

tion so often to be found in those who treat of subjects, which repeated discussion has rendered familiar to the public mind. The latter are usually characterized by an ostentatious parade of figurative language, by an exuberance of antitheses, and a frothy phraseology; while the former strongly impressed with the dignity of their theme, are more distinguished by energy, conciseness, and eloquence, which are best fitted to maintain their cause, to impress conviction, and to repel hostility. He then mentions the principal christian writers, and, contrasting their styles, pronounces a decisive judgment.

The arts I approach with trembling apprehension. These had to suffer from the new establishment; and we may notice its beginning, when, at Ephesus, an uproar arose among the artists, because Paul had taught, "that there be no gods which are made with hands;" by which the temple of the great goddess Diana was likely to be despised, and her magnificence destroyed *. The genius of the Grecian artists had been principally displayed in forming the effigies of their deities. What then was to be expected from the influence of a system, of which the leading tenet was, that "there be no gods that are made with hands?" What was apprehended at Ephesus was equally to be expected wherever that system should prevail. The artists would be left without employment, the temples without worshippers, and their idols derided or destroyed.

Zeal, properly enlightened, would easily have discriminated

* Acts, c. XIX.

between the works of men's hands, and their abuse. It would have spared the temples, which might be adapted to better purposes; and while it ridiculed their worship would have preserved the statues as monuments of art. The temples, as we know, were often spared; and there is a law of Honorius which prohibited sacrifices, but directed the edifices not to be destroyed. It is evident, that I am speaking of the period in which christianity was triumphant. At this time, it not unfrequently happened, that new edifices for christian worship were constructed from old materials, and the skill of the artist was sometimes manifested in a monstrous junction of bases and capitals*. Many ornamental parts were at the same time taken to embellish the palaces of the great.

The statues, for which heathenism had expressed a religious veneration, experienced a worse fate. But can we be surprised? Look to the Iconoclasm of the eighth century in the East, and to that of our own country, in a much later period, when the Apollo of Belvidere or any other exquisite specimen of art, had they been said to represent a Christian saint, would have been dashed to pieces or crumbled into dust by its impetuous fury. Fanaticism never differs from itself. The civilized nations of Europe, and particularly Italy, have expiated the extravagant superstition of their ancestors, by the encouragement which they have since given to the arts, and by the veneration with which every fragment has been preserved, which time, barbarism, and fanaticism had spared.

* Winkelmann, t. II. p. 326.

BOOK I.

The establishment of Christianity then, or rather, the misguided zeal of its votaries, was adverse to the fine arts. In another sense, the very spirit of that religion was adverse to their encouragement. When the Greeks exhibited the images of their Deities, the talents of the greatest masters were employed. But the God of the Christians, a Being abstracted from matter, and infinite in his attributes, could not be brought within the grasp of sense, or delineated under any palpable form, however grateful or sublime. To make the attempt was an act of impiety; for it degraded his nature, and annulled his essence. Let us, for a moment, advert to the Olympian Jupiter by Phidias, which was the masterpiece of ancient art, and was copied, as himself acknowledged, from the description of the God in Homer, when the prayer of Thetis being granted, the poet says:

> He ceased, and under his dark brows the nod
> Vouchsafed of confirmation. All around
> The sov'reign's everlasting head, his curls
> Ambrosial shook, and the huge mountain reeled.
>
> *Il.* 1. *Cowper.*

To the dark brows and ambrosial curls, the artist had added an image of victory in the right hand, and a burnished sceptre in the left, and over the whole figure he had cast an air of divine majesty, which impressed the beholder with veneration and astonishment. The above lines are calculated to excite a sensation of respect and awe. But tell me: that this form shall represent him, whose name is, *I am that I am*; "whose power is infinite; whose presence is universal, and from whose knowledge even no thought is concealed," the illusion instantly vanishes, and the sublime work of Phidias

dwindles to an ordinary mortal with a bushy head of hair, dark eyebrows, and a flowing beard.

But I pretend not to say, that when the divine models were taken away from the artist, other subjects were not left, and many new ones supplied by the Christian institute, on all which, we know, that the pencil and the chisel have been exercised with eminent success.

The State of *Grecian* Literature during the same Period.

As Greece has been often mentioned, and her influence on the literature and arts of the West, has at all times been obvious—it may be acceptable to the reader to know, what was their fate in a more genial soil.

After the fall of Perseus, the last of the Macedonian kings, whom the Achaians were accused of favouring, we read of more than a thousand Greeks, of distinguished merit, who by command of the conquerors, were transported into Italy, in order to account for their conduct. This account was not demanded; but, by another sentence not less arbitrary, they were dispersed in the neighbouring cities; and there detained for more than seventeen years. Polybius the historian was one of this number; and when his companions, who had diffused a love of Grecian literature, were permitted to return, he remained in Rome, where his great talents and many virtues had obtained general esteem. He was particularly intimate in the family of Paulus Emilius; and he became the friend, the adviser, and the companion of the Younger Scipio*. At Rome he wrote his *History*; but he wrote it in

* See the Roman writers on this era about the year of Rome, 586.

BOOK I.

the language of his country. Of this admirable work the greater part is lost; but that which remains deserves to be recommended to the perusal of the statesman for its lessons of political wisdom, and of the soldier for its judicious instructions in the military art.

Panetius, whom Cicero calls the first of Stoic philosophers*, opened at the same period a school in Rome which was frequented by persons of the greatest distinction; and Polybius† observes that other learned Greeks, were daily crowding to the city. A severe decree of the senate, of which the motive is not declared, soon, indeed, ordered the Greek professors into exile; but an impression had been made in favour of science: and, within a few years, a political disturbance in Greece brought three of the most renowned Athenian philosophers to the Roman capital. These teachers of wisdom displayed all the elegance, and pomp of oratory; and were heard with admiration. The young men, says Plutarch‡, abandoning every other pleasure, devoted their minds to the study of philosophy. The austere Cato was disgusted. He perceived that the love of arms, would shortly be absorbed in a passion for letters. The fathers of the senate were not exempt from the contagion; and he feared the effect on the public mind. He, therefore, exerted his authority to procure the dismission of these dangerous emissaries of science; vainly hoping, that his fellow-citizens would then return to the graver pursuits of their fathers.

---

* *Acad. quæst. l.* IV.

† *Exemp. Virt. et vit. c.* 73.

‡ *Plut. in Cat. Cens.*

While the genius of Grecian literature triumphed in Rome, the arms of Rome were gaining another triumph over the liberties and independence of Greece. Some provocation, it may be admitted, had been given to the proud republic; but to dare to be free, when the neighbouring nations had submitted to be slaves, was deemed ample provocation. "In the divided state of the Grecian republics, though the Achaian league formed a loose bond of union amongst them, resistance served only to irritate animosity, and to provoke oppression. This fate, Metellus, the Roman general, seemed anxious to avert; but he was succeeded by the consul Mummius, who, at the head of a powerful army, advanced into the country, gained a complete victory, plundered, and burnt Corinth, which the arts of painting and sculpture, seemed to have selected for their favourite abode. Soon after this commissioners arrived from Rome; by whom the popular governments in all the cities were abolished; magistrates established under a Roman prætor; the Achaian league dissolved; and Greece reduced to a province of the empire. This was effected in the one hundred and forty-sixth year before the Christian æra, and the same in which Carthage fell.

In this disastrous period of the Grecian History, we must not, either in arts or letters, expect to find that transcendent excellence, which had excited the admiration of the polished world. From the age of Alexander the Greeks, compelled to submit to a master, had lost that elevation of character which liberty had produced; and a great degeneracy soon appeared in every intellectual pursuit. As the spirit of patriotism vanished, the fire of genius seemed to become extinct; and it is

BOOK I. generally agreed, that their subsequent artists, as well as their poets, orators, historians, and philosophers, were mere imitators of the great originals of their country. It would have been well had they been content only to imitate; but whilst incapable of primitive excellence, they still coveted distinction, and vainly struggled to merit fame by false conceits and artificial refinements. Notwithstanding this marked degeneracy, the language of Greece was every-where spoken; and Athens remained the principal seat of philosophy and of the arts.

Of the political state of Athens it is proper to observe, that, in the Macedonian war, having remained attached to the interests of Rome, she shared not the fate of the other cities; and even, after the destruction of Corinth, and the dissolution of the Achaian league, she continued in the full possession of her ancient liberties. But her consequence was gone. And things remained in this state, without any remarkable alteration, till, in the Mithridatic war, she was seduced by the artifices of one of her citizens, the philosopher Aristo, to declare against the Romans. The year after this fatal step, Sylla entered Greece, and sitting down before Athens, continued the siege with various success; and, after a desperate resistance, during which the edifices, sacred groves, and the walks of the academy without the walls were destroyed, he forced an entrance, and delivered up the city to the plunder of his soldiers. Still the relentless conqueror could feel something like sympathy for the destiny of Athens; and he said, that he would pardon the children for the sake of their fathers. His resentment, however, impelled him to direct many stately buildings to be levelled; and he collected an

immense booty in the precious productions of the arts. After this he left the unfortunate city to ruminate over the miseries which its own temerity had occasioned, and to the enjoyment of such liberty as could be felt amidst ruins *. These calamities were succeeded by a period of tranquillity which experienced some temporary interruptions during the civil commotions of the empire.

If the allurements of the Roman capital had attracted so many learned Greeks, while their country was free, we must now expect to behold a more general emigration. The various sects of Philosophers, Stoics, Epicureans, Peripatetics, Academics, appeared in Rome †; inculcated the principles of their respective schools with winning sophistry; and failed not to add to the number of their followers and admirers. The works of Cicero which were written at a somewhat later period will shew us how this admiration extended, and who were the philosophers of principal distinction who then resorted to the Roman capital. It is worthy of remark, that even the works of Aristotle owed their first publication to Rome. They had been preserved, but not in an unmutilated state; and had not been circulated in Greece, when they fell into the hands of Sylla, who, with other spoils, conveyed them to Italy ‡.

* Plut. in Syl. † See Brucker, Hist. Crit. Philos. t. II. c. I.

‡ Brucker, Hist. Phil. t. II. c. I.

BOOK I.

When the Augustan age commenced, we know, with what ardour every literary object was pursued, and that the Romans, not satisfied with the instructions which might be collected from the learned Greeks at Rome, travelled to Athens, in order to study on the spot which so many men of great talents and genius had adorned. But two observations must here be made, not very creditable to Greece, and which shew, that the sun of their literary renown had set. 1st. In looking over the list of writers who, at this time flourished *, I find few Greek names of any eminence: 2d. Of those who now visited Greece it is said, that the objects of their admiration were not the works of contemporaries, but those of Phidias and Apelles, of Sophocles, Plato, and Demosthenes †.

In the list just alluded to, are the two historians Diodorus Siculus and Dionisius of Halicarnassus; from the first of whom we have a *General History* of all nations, and from the second, *Roman Antiquities*; both in Greek, and both imperfect. They had resided many years in Rome, during the reigns of Cæsar and of Augustus. We do not expect to find in them the style of Thucydides or of Xenophon; but their works abound with valuable information. With these authors was nearly contemporary the celebrated geographer Strabo ‡.

* See Lenglet du Fresnoy, t. I. Fabricius Bib. Græc. passim.

† Gillies: *History of Greece*, vol. IV. 8vo. p. 399.

‡ Bib. Græc. t. III. IV V.

Having taken possession, as it seemed, of the Roman schools, the Greeks were not willing to relinquish the place of honour; and, during the succeeding ages, whilst they were generally countenanced by the reigning princes, we find them conspicuous in every intellectual pursuit, that of poetry excepted, and maintaining the high prerogative of their language. I must not omit to mention even while the house of Cæsar continued to disgrace the purple, the name of Epictetus, the first of heathen moralists, whose *Enchiridion* Christians may peruse with advantage. To Epictetus we must add Arrian, the judicious historian of the *Expeditions of Alexander*, and the disciple of Epictetus; Dion, from his eloquence named Chrysostom, of whom many *orations* and a treatise on the *Duties of Kings* are extant; and Plutarch, the most celebrated of biographers, and the most agreeable of moralists. These learned men were natives of Asia Minor, if we except Plutarch who was a Bœotian; but Rome was their place of general residence*.

Nor are the succeeding writers entitled to less praise: Appian of Alexandria, who, in the reign of Antoninus, wrote a *Roman History*, of which much has perished: Ptolemy of Pelusium in Egypt, the geographer and astronomer, whose system of the world prevailed, till it was superseded by more modern discoveries:—Lucian of Samosata in Syria, whose elegant and lively *Dialogues* will be read, as long as Attic wit shall please, and lively representations of the follies and eccentricities of human nature shall interest. In the reign of

* See the Bib. Græc. t. IV.

BOOK I. Antoninus, Pausanias of Cæsarea in Cappadocia, wrote *Travels through Greece*, a work, which to the charm of an easy narrative, adds an accurate description of the country, as he then found it, and therefore must be deemed highly important to the study of antiquity, and the history of the arts. From Dion Cassius of Nice in Bithynia, the favourite of many Emperors, by whom he was raised to the highest offices in the state, we possess the remains of a *Roman History*, composed in a style which the severest critic may approve, but not with a mind less influenced by prejudice than by truth. Herodian wrote with some elegance, principally on those transactions of the *Roman* state, with which he had himself been personally acquainted *.

In Constantinople, in the first half of the fifth century, Zosimus compiled a *History* of the Emperors, from Augustus to the year 410. The work, as we have it, is incomplete; and is written with great freedom, with much asperity, and with striking indications of an undue partiality. From the freedom with which he exposes the conduct of some christian emperors, an attempt was early made, and not without success, to throw suspicion on his veracity. But the style is pure and perspicuous, not void of sweetness, nor wantonly rhetorical.

These writers, the last excepted, spent the greater part of their lives in Rome; and their works evince, that the decline

* Bib. Græc. t. IV. v.

of Grecian literature must not, in its descent, be compared with that of the western world. It has even been made a question, why the former should have maintained its superiority, particularly in the line of historical composition. That so many of that nation should have written on the affairs of Rome, can occasion no surprise, when the magnitude of the object is considered; but it may be remarked, that none of them were from Greece, properly so called.

But Longinus was from Athens, (at least he passed much of his life in that city), the tutor and minister of Zenobia, the queen of Palmyra. Of his works, which are said to have been numerous, the *Treatise on the Sublime*, (with the exception of a few fragments) alone remains; but this has immortalized his memory. When Palmyra opened her gates to the victorious Aurelian, the philosopher, to whom the resistance which that city had made, was ascribed, was seized and executed. We may be allowed to think that, amidst the palaces, temples, and porticos of that celebrated spot—the ruins of which, scattered over an extent of several miles, still excite the admiration of travellers—the mind of Longinus had learned to cherish those elevated conceptions which he so vividly felt and so energetically expressed. It is however, by some, thought, that his principal works were completed before he visited Palmyra. He died about the year 270*.

It was philosophy, however, which, at this time, most en-

* Bib. Græc. t. IV. Dissert. Philolog. Ed. Toupe.

BOOK I. gaged the Grecian mind; and Alexandria was its principal school. Ammianus Marcellinus, in describing this celebrated city, speaks of the temple of Serapis, with its columns, its breathing statues, and its other ornaments, which the Roman capital could alone equal; of its libraries, collected by the Ptolomies, which contained seven hundred thousand volumes, part of which had been consumed in the war with Cæsar; of its climate, refreshed by genial gales, which to a native of Italy might seem the climate of another world; of the eminent men, by whose labours it had been illustrated, and of its present literary pursuits *. Here Ammonius † taught, who was the father of that sect which was distinguished by the name of the New Platonics, and which, pretending to form into one compound all the various systems of philosophy and all the modes of religion, spread with amazing rapidity throughout the greatest part of the Roman world. But as in the doctrines concerning the Deity, the human Soul, and things invisible, they gave a preference to the opinions of Plato, they received the appellation of Platonists. Many learned christians were eager to enter this comprehensive pale; and particularly Alexandrian doctors, who, with the profession of the gospel, wished to retain the title, the dignity, and the habit of philosophers. But, certainly, the simplicity of the christian doctrine could ill accord with an heterogeneous mass, made up of all the follies which the mind of man had conceived, which the genius of Ammonius and his scholars in vain attempted to blend into

* Rer. Gest. l. xxii. c. xvi. † Bib. Græc. t. iv. c. xxvi.

one consistent whole. Among these scholars the most eminent was Plotinus, who travelled much, and resided long in Rome, where many illustrious men became his followers. Of this number was Porphyry, a native of Tyre, and a dangerous enemy of christianity; but who still further diffused the doctrines of the Ammonian school, and adorned the lessons which he taught with the blandishments of a polished style. He had studied eloquence under Longinus*.

But though Alexandria and other schools had become so renowned, it must not be imagined, that those of Greece were deserted. The proximity to Byzantium, when it became the seat of empire, would more strongly recommend them; and Athens, we know, was now much frequented. Here, about the year 350, we find Julian, afterwards named the apostate, and with him the two friends, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Basil of Cæsarea, the first of whom has given us some account of the Athenian schools, and a minute delineation of the person of Julian†. The talents which these luminaries of the church possessed, and the eloquence which they displayed, do honour to the schools of Athens; and if to these we join two other christian orators, Gregory of Nyssa, the brother of Basil, and John Chrysostom, the bishop of Constantinople, Grecian eloquence must still be admitted to have maintained a high degree of excellence. Erasmus, though he

---

* *Brucker; Hist. Phil. t.* II. *sect.* 4. *Dissert. ut ante. Bib. Græc. t.* IV. *c.* XXVI.

† *Greg. Naz. op. pass.*

BOOK I. speaks much in praise of Chrysostom, is inclined to give the palm to the bishop of Cæsarea.

Among the Emperors who were favourable to letters, Constantius, the son of Constantine, is related to have opened a public library in Constantinople, which was afterwards much augmented by Julian. The latter erected some stately edifices for the reception of books, to the number of which he sedulously added, and which, it is said, were gradually accumulated to one hundred and twenty thousand; while Greek and Latin secretaries, who were maintained from the royal treasury, were constantly employed in making accurate transcripts of ancient authors, or in preparing new compositions. Other cities also had libraries, particularly Antioch; and many, necessarily, were the private collections: but I read, at this time, of no public library in Athens.

To this view much more might be added; but what has been said may suffice to shew, that the Grecian tongue, whilst it was so generally cultivated, had not lost its primitive beauty; and that works had not ceased to be published, in which taste, elegance, and judgment are conspicuous; while the arts, as far as they were patronised, continued to be indebted to Grecian ingenuity *.

* See *Bib. Græc. passim, also Leitfaden, etc. von Meusel.*

BOOK II.

A VIEW OF THE FALLEN STATE OF LITERATURE AND THE ARTS, FROM THE FALL OF THE WESTERN EMPIRE, IN 476, TO THE BEGINNING OF THE REIGN OF CHARLEMAGNE, IN 774.

SETTLEMENTS OF THE BARBAROUS NATIONS—IN ITALY—IN SPAIN—IN GAUL—IN AFRICA—IN GERMANY—IN BRITAIN—THE HUNNS—REFLECTIONS ON THE CHARACTER OF THE GOTHS—GENERAL OUTLINE OF THE TIMES—STATE OF LEARNING IN ITALY DURING THE GOTHIC REIGN—DISASTROUS STATE OF ITALY—REIGN OF THE LOMBARDS—STATE OF LEARNING—THE END OF THE LOMBARD GOVERNMENT—FRENCH WRITERS—SPANISH WRITERS—GERMANY—THE STATE OF ENGLAND—BEDE—THE WORKS PRINCIPALLY READ IN THE SCHOOLS.

BOOK II. Settlements of the barbarous Nations.

AS the most fatal blow to the declining cause of literature and the polite arts was given by the settlement of the various barbarous tribes in the kingdoms of Europe, that malignant influence did not cease to operate, till time, and the tissue of events, having improved the state of society, began to generate new desires, and excite into new action the dormant powers of mind. Thus, in the moral order of things, a revolving system seems to prevail; and change, with a greater or less celerity, succeeds to change, as man ascends the arduous steep of excellence, or falls back, into degeneracy and igno-

BOOK II. rance. The barbarous tribes, whom I have mentioned, were our progenitors: it may, therefore, be proper, as their characters and habits were alike, briefly to state, what portions of Europe they occupied at this period.

They came from the provinces of Germany which the Romans had not subdued, and from the widely extended regions of the north of Europe and north-west of Asia, which regions, from the swarms which they poured out upon the south, have received the significant appellation of the "Storehouse of nations." Whence this exuberant fecundity, which has hardly been equalled in the more genial circumstances of modern times, has not been explained; and we may be allowed to think, that the imagination was not idle in calculating the population of a ferocious and conquering enemy. "But their true numbers," observes a just reasoner *, "were never known. Those who were conquered by them are their historians, and shame may have excited them to say, that they were overwhelmed with multitudes. To count is a modern practice, the ancient method was to guess; and when numbers are guessed they are always magnified." To this enemy, as they made their incursions from different quarters or at different times, various names have been given; though it is generally agreed, that they were children of the same stock; and they have been long designated by the common appellation of Goths †.

* Dr. Johnson: *Journey to the Western Islands*, p. 226.

† Jornandes de Rebus Geticis, c. 4, etc.

I have related, that, in 476, the fate of the Western Empire, dismembered as it had been, year after year, was finally decided by Odoacer, at the head of the Heruli. Under this chieftain, during thirteen years, Italy enjoyed repose; when the Ostrogoth Theodoric invaded the country, and, after an obstinate resistance, founded the Gothic dynasty in 493*. In Italy.

The remoter provinces of the empire were less capable of opposing the overwhelming torrent. Early in the fifth century, we see the Vandals, the Alani, and the Suevi, dividing among themselves the Spanish territory, while the Romans opposed only a feeble resistance, and the country experienced more than the ordinary waste of war. But what amity could subsist amongst these barbarous tribes, who were all intent on extending their possessions? They quarrelled: the Visigoths, who were masters of southern Gaul, joined the Romans; but, about the year 468, the Romans themselves were completely driven out of the country: and the Visigoth empire was founded by their leader Euric, who still retained the Gaulish provinces, of which Toulouse was the capital†. In Spain.

The northern part of Gaul had been long invaded, and long, partially, occupied by the Franks. Their permanent establishment is fixed as early as the year 351; after which time they continued to extend themselves, though often In Gaul.

* Jornandes de Rebus Geticis, c. 57. Hist. Miscell. l. xv. Procop. l. i. c. 1, inter Rer. Ital. Scriptores, t. i.

† See the same writers.

BOOK II. vigorously opposed; and before the middle of the fifth century, they began to number their kings of the Merovingian race. Of this race was the celebrated Clovis, the real founder of the French monarchy, who, in the beginning of the sixth century, established the seat of his empire at Paris *.

In the fifth century, which was every-where so fatal to the Roman power, another tribe, named Burgundians, had seized the eastern part of Gaul; but they were finally reduced by the overbearing power of the Franks †.

In Africa. The Vandals were now masters of Africa. About the year 428, under the conduct of the ferocious Genseric, they had voluntarily relinquished their conquests in Spain, and landing in Africa, subdued the country in a few years. The Romans, every-where trembled at the name of Genseric, and history has recorded his conquests, his depredations on all the neighbouring coasts, and his pillage of Rome, in 455. He died about the year 480, leaving the kingdom, which he had founded, to his son Huneric ‡.

In Germany. So widely extended was the country known by the name of Germany, and so various the nations comprehended under the common appellation of Germans, that it is not easy to convey any distinct idea of the revolutions, which that country experienced. Many of the barbarous tribes of which I have

---

* See the authors before quoted, also Gregory of Tours, Hist. Franc.

† Ibid. ‡ Procop. Bel. Vand. l. 1.

poken, came either from Germany, or certainly through its provinces, and as the Romans were compelled to retire, new states of independent nations were formed, collected from the aboriginal inhabitants, or from such strangers as had chosen that country for their abode. When the Western Empire fell, the Germans were established in their primitive liberty; and it may be said of them, that, not having been overrun and extirpated by invaders, the stock remained pure, and their customs, manners, and institutions, in a great measure, unchanged *.

In Britain.

"The Romans had been masters of Britain more than four hundred years," when early in the same inauspicious century, the misfortunes of which we have so often deplored, they voluntarily withdrew their legions, for the defence of the more vital parts of the empire. The Britons had reluctantly submitted their necks to the yoke; but usage had reconciled them to servitude; they had adopted the manners of the conquerors†, on whom they were habituated to rely for protection against the inroads of the northern borderers. It was with deep regret, that they beheld the Roman troops depart, after which, during thirty years, we peruse ‡ the lamentable tale of their sufferings, and their degeneracy; when, in public council, it was agreed to invite the assistance of the Saxon pirates. The Saxons landed about the year 450; and the progressive history of their successes, and of the brave but unavailing

* See Cæsar, Tacitus, etc.

† Tacit. in Vit. Agric.

‡ Gildas excid. Britan.

BOOK II.

resistance by which they were opposed, is too well known to need any explanation.

The Hunns.

While Europe had been thus wasted, and occupied by the various nations of the Gothic family, a still more barbarous people, from the regions north of Mount Caucasus, were busied in the same work of devastation, sometimes making war on both empires, at others serving in their armies; uniting with the Goths, at one period, and pursuing them with the most hostile vengeance at another. The primitive parents, as Jornandes gravely writes, from whom the Hunns derived their origin, were devils and witches; an opinion which betrays the formidable impression made on the Gothic mind. Those, says he, whom they could not subdue by force of arms, they put to flight by their horrid aspect. Their grim visage, deformed by scars, in which no eyes were visible, seemed like a formless lump of flesh. Low in stature, but active and muscular, they were expert horsemen, and skilled in the use of the bow. Their whole deportment breathed defiance, while their manners were savage, and their way of life beastly. After various exploits, and battles won and lost, in almost every province of the west, and in many parts of the east, particularly under their great leader Attila, these formidable savages had, before the end of the fifth century, the possession of extensive territories beyond the Danube *.

Reflections on the character of the Goths.

It may with truth be said, that at the opening of the sixth

* See Jornandes de Reb. Get, Procop. de Bel. Goth. Hist. Misc.

century, no country of the former Western Empire remained unoccupied by some barbarous tribe. The ancient inhabitants, and the Romans who had settled amongst them, were exterminated in a long succession of ravage and war; they were compelled to seek for shelter in some other soil; or, mixed in the invading mass, were utterly lost to observation. What we know to have happened in this country may assist us in forming some notion of the fate of other regions. Those institutions, laws, manners, arts, and sciences, which it is the work of ages even imperfectly to establish, disappeared. When the Romans conquered any people they introduced amongst them the arts, the improvements, the comforts of polished life; and, in return for the loss of independence, bestowed the capacities of more rational existence. These capacities, and more than these, the actual acquirements of civilized society, the Goths and Hunns dissipated into air; and contemning what they had no capacity to enjoy, they reproduced the reign of barbarism.

But were these people really so barbarous, as the writers of Roman history have been studious to represent them? On this subject Tacitus, in describing the German nations, or more recent authors*, who witnessed the overwhelming force of the Gothic invaders, must be read with caution. Their language was not at all or only imperfectly understood; and there would be a stronger propensity hideously to exaggerate rather than faithfully to depict what was necessarily viewed

* Hist. August. Script. Ammian. Marcell. pass.

BOOK II. through an opake and troubled medium, when the country had been laid waste; property forcibly alienated; friends murdered or exiled; the endearing monuments of other days overturned; and all that was venerable derided or deformed. Though in all this few excesses might be committed, which are not the usual attendants on invasion and conquest—the sufferers were not likely to be sparing of their complaints; and of their invectives where they could be vented with impunity.

Jornandes, a Gothic monk, by some styled bishop of Ravenna *, who lived in the sixth century, is more partial, as might be expected, and perhaps more exact in describing the character of a people from whom he was himself descended. He says that they surpassed the Romans in figure and in bravery:—they had among them, he adds, even at the time of their early migrations, men of extraordinary erudition, who were their masters in the schools of wisdom: hence the Goths were esteemed more learned than other barbarous nations, and *almost* comparable with the Greeks. He proceeds to describe their devotion to the god Mars, whom they propitiated by human victims; their further advances in civilization; and their skill in music. He observes, that about the time of Sylla and of Julius Cæsar, the Goths, whom the latter could not conquer, were wholly guided by the advice of the

* This, on weighty reasons, is controverted by Muratori, Præf. ad Jornand. t. I. int. Rer. Ital. Scrip.—The work of Jornandes is an abridgment of the History of the celebrated Cassiodorus, on the same subject, which has been lost. See Fabricius, Bib. Lat. t. II.

sage Diceneus. Sensible of their docile disposition, and their natural talents, there was no part of philosophy which he withheld from them. He instructed them in ethics, in order to civilize their manners; in the laws of nature, to shew them, that these laws were to be observed; and he taught them logic, which rendered them more expert than other nations in the art of reasoning. He proposed to their contemplation the theory of the twelve zodiacal signs, the revolutions of the planets, and the whole science of astronomy, which shews the increase and wane of the moon, and how much the fiery globe of the sun exceeds the earth in magnitude. With what pleasure then, says he, when the repose of a few days allowed a respite from arms—did these brave men turn their thoughts to philosophy! You might observe one scrutinizing the face of the heavens; another exploring the nature of herbs and fruits; a third calculating the uses of the moon; and a fourth pursuing the labours of the sun in its diurnal course. By these and many other lessons, the fame of Diceneus had become so great, that all orders of men, and even the chiefs, obeyed him. He then selected the most worthy, whom he instructed in theology, and taught to worship the gods *. Cosmosicus, his successor, and not his inferior in wisdom, was held in almost equal veneration. He became the king and high priest of the Gothic people, whom he ruled in justice.

Thus writes the Gothic Jornandes; but in describing the Hunns, who were the enemies of his nation, he makes use of

* De rebus Get. c. xi.

BOOK II. the darkest colours; and has recourse to fable in order to deepen the shades*. We may then naturally suppose, that both the pictures are deficient in historical impartiality; and if some deduction may justly be made from his praise, an unreserved credit should not be given to his abuse. But it is evident, that from their habits of vagrant and predatory life, these nations were composed of barbarians; though some tribes might have received a tincture of such elementary knowledge, as their historian has described. Even after a residence of some years in Italy, we find the Goths characterized by a sort of innate distaste for literature.

If the Goths were so enlightened, as is asserted, particularly in what regarded religion, their maxims widely differed from those of the Gauls and Germans. Among the former, over whom the Druids presided, it is known, with what jealous caution all sacred knowledge was withheld. Nothing even of History, or of philosophy, was committed to writing; but what it might, on solemn occasions, be proper to communicate to the people, was recorded in songs or ballads, which were preserved by memory. But they seem to have all agreed, that to perform deeds of valour was more glorious than to speak or write elegantly; and that mental application, as tending to withdraw the individual from the use of arms, was beneath the dignity of manhood. The Gauls, however, as they have been represented to us by Cæsar†, and the Germans, as they

* De rebus Get. c. xxiv. † Cæs. Comment. l. vi. Tacit. de mor. Germ.

have been depicted by Tacitus, appear far superior to the Goths in their maxims and institutions, and we may lament that the enervating effects of Roman intercourse, should have prepared them for the yoke of servitude.

After the extinction of the literary spirit and the cessation of intellectual culture throughout the west of Europe, the barbarous conquerors might with pleasure contemplate a state of society, in few respects, raised above the level of their own. The few instances in which they might discern any traces of mental superiority were not such as were calculated to create the feeling of envy or the sense of inferiority, particularly when they had obtained such a signal triumph over those who affected a superiority in intellectual attainments. Amalasuntha, the daughter of the Gothic King Theodoric, was left guardian to her son Athalaric, the heir to the Italian throne. She was herself a woman of uncommon endowments, compared with the standard of that age; for she had listened to the political lectures of Cassiodorus and imbibed wisdom from the lips of Boetius. It was her anxious wish that her son should be educated after the Roman manner, and frequent the public schools. At the same time, she selected for his tutors, three individuals from among the Goths of mature age, and of distinguished celebrity for their wisdom and moderation. This measure did not please; and one day when she had punished him, and he was seen in tears, the Gothic lords were filled with indignation, and waited on the queen. "This method of education, Madam," said they "is neither honourable to our prince, nor advantageous to us. Courage is not promoted by letters, and the lessons of age often gene-

BOOK II.

rate cowardice and pusillanimity. Athalaric must, hereafter, shew his prowess in the field, and aspire to military renown. Dismiss then these pedants, and let the youth be trained to arms. Theodoric would not permit our Gothic children to frequent the schools, as he remarked that those, who had been taught to tremble at the rod, would never look without shuddering on the spear. And he, Madam, conquered provinces, and acquired a crown, though not a whisper of learning had approached his ears. Reflect on this; and let your son have companions of his own age, from whose conversation he may imbibe generous sentiments, and learn to govern agreeably to the institutions of the Goths*." Amalasuntha reluctantly assented; and the youth, after a few years, was worn out by debauchery and carried to the grave.

General Outline of the Times.

The prospect which now lies before us, is dreary to behold. It is spread over an immeasurable extent, not altogether destitute of fertility, but without cultivation. The objects capable of interesting the attention will be but few. But may we not, with a sort of melancholy pleasure, dwell on these few as we do on the fragments of some dilapidated monument? The difference is palpable. These fragments delight, because they still shew the exquisite taste of the artist, and serve to carry our contemplations back to the days of other years when sublimity, combined with beauty, attested the perfection of human skill. Other associations enter into the general conception.

* Procopius de Bel. Goth. c. 11. He was a Greek, lived in the court of Justinian, and was a witness to many of the events which he related.

But where all is rude and tasteless, however entire the object may be, no gratification is experienced.

A late writer of great classical taste, speaking of this period, calls it "the age of monkery and legends; of Leonine verses (that is, of bad Latin put into rhime); of projects to divide truth by plough-shares; of Crusades to conquer infidels and extirpate heretics; of princes deposed, not as Cræsus was by Cyrus, but by one who had no armies, and who did not even wear a sword*." Yet he allows, that some sparks of intellect were, at all times, visible; and he proceeds beautifully to observe, that the few who were enlightened, when arts and sciences were thus obscured, may be said to have maintained the *continuity* of knowledge; "to have been (if I may use the expression) like the twilight of a summer's night; that auspicious gleam between the setting and the rising sun, which, though it cannot retain the lustre of the day, helps at least to save us from the totality of darkness." The observations are rather applicable to times not quite so remote.

State of Learning in Italy, during the Reign of the Goths.

When Theodoric, about the year 493, was firmly seated on the throne, we are told that Italy once more enjoyed the return of happy days; and the happier, doubtless, because by no means the object of previous expectation. Unlike other conquerors, Theodoric, sensible of the superiority which marked the manners of the people whom he had subdued, he left them in possession of their laws, which he commanded to

* Philolog. Inquiries, p. III. c. I.

BOOK II.

be inviolably observed, and he retained the same form of government, the same distribution of provinces, the same magistrates and dignities. By this policy he hoped to reconcile even the Romans to his sovereignty; and to convince them, that, though a barbarian, he was more worthy of a sceptre than many of their nation by whom the throne of Cæsar had been occupied. The mind of Theodoric, it is certain, can not justly be designated by the epithet barbarous. He had indeed received a military education amongst his countrymen; but he had visited, at Byzantium, and had received signal favours from the imperial court. And, what is a striking proof of a discriminating mind he chose for his principal adviser, a man of great learning and integrity, the celebrated Cassiodorus. It seems, however, to be generally admitted, unless by those who perpetually merged truth in flattery, that he was extremely illiterate, and could never accomplish the arduous task of writing his own name. The reader has just heard the barbarous speech of the Gothic nobles to Amalasuntha. 'But the greater praise is due to Theodoric, if, while, from the defect of education, he was himself void of learning, he could value it in others,' and, through a reign of thirty-three years, be the encourager and the patron of letters. As the late princes had made Ravenna the seat of empire, Theodoric made it his usual place of residence*.

* See on the reign and character of the Gothic king, the many writers quoted by Muratori in his Annali d'Italia, t. III.; also Rer. Ital. Scrip. pas.

In speaking of the character of the Gothic people, I might have observed, that the superstitious reverence, which they had always shewn to the ministers of religion, contributed much, on their first invasion, to the well-being of the conquered countries, and more after their conversion to the Christian faith. They transferred this hallowed feeling to the new sacerdotal order; and, under its influence, spared their persons, with the edifices and other objects, with which they were associated. Learning and its repositories thus sometimes experienced protection, while palaces and castles, with their inhabitants, were wrapt in flames. This deference for the priesthood was inherited by Theodoric. It was usual with him, early in the morning, to frequent a religious assembly of bishops and other ministers, with whom he familiarly conversed; though it seemed, says the historian*, to have been the effect of a habit long contracted, rather than dictated by any motive of rational respect.

Cassiodorus, to whose counsels Italy was indebted for her repose, and Theodoric for his fame, was a native of Calabria. He had experienced the patronage of Odoacer; but, under Theodoric, he had been raised to the highest offices of the state, which he continued to administer under his successors, till the commencement of the Gothic war. He then retired from all public employments; and in the solitude of a monastery, he closed a long life of usefulness and virtue.

---

* De Theod. ap Jornand. p. 181.

BOOK II.

Of his various works* the principal is a collection of *Letters*, written whilst he was minister to the Gothic kings; and is therefore highly interesting from the historical matter which it contains. He was also the author of a Gothic *History*, which is lost, except in its probable abridgment of Jornandes.† His style is characterized in a few words, when it is said to possess a harmony, a construction, and a phraseology, so peculiarly his own, as to be best defined by the expression—*barbarous elegance.*‡ His digressions are numerous, and his display of learning such, as if it had been his wish to shame the gross ignorance of his contemporaries, or to make the faded honours of literature revive. The moment of his retirement, it has been said, was the epoch of their expiration. In his retirement, however, Cassiodorus continued to write on subjects which were adapted to his new calling. He employed his monks in the meritorious labours of transcription; he was instrumental in procuring translations of Greek authors; and he enriched his monastery with a copious collection of books. This monastery, which he had himself founded, was situated near Squillaci, in Calabria; and if he died in 575, his age wanted but little of a hundred years. The name of the Grammarian and philologist Priscian may be mentioned here, though he taught at Constantinople, and seems not to have been a Latin by birth. Cassiodorus speaks of him as his equal in age. His various works on his own art gained him a high

---

* See a list of them in Cave and in Fabricius, Bib. Lat. t. II.

† See the Præf. by Muratori, t. I. Rer. Ital.

‡ Tiraboschi Storia della Letterat. t. III. p. 17.

reputation, and for many centuries they were the guides to the Latin tongue in the schools of Europe. The grammar or elementary introduction for beginners, was called his *Alphabet*, and that for the more advanced acquired the appellation of the *Great Priscian* *.

Contemporary likewise with Cassiodorus, and equally favoured by Theodoric, was the philosopher Boetius, who had studied at Athens. Boetius was the object of extravagant encomiums. In eloquence he was said to have united the graces of Demosthenes and of Cicero; to have combined what was most valuable in the Greek and Latin authors; and, in attempting to imitate, to have surpassed the ablest models of antiquity †. This exaggerated commendation, if it were sincere, proved how little men were then able to appreciate literary merit. Many of his works were translations from the Greek; and for these he was liberally praised by Cassiodorus‡. Addicted to the sect of the Peripatetics, and an admirer of Aristotle, but not to the exclusion of Plato, he brought the writings of the Stagyrite into vogue, and may be regarded as the founder of that scholastic lore which afterwards prevailed. But the work of Boetius, which alone is now read; which has been translated into all languages; and which has been generally admired for the philosophical amenity, expressive senti-

* See, on the Latin Grammarians, a curious article in Fabricius, Bib. Lat. t. II. extracted from the work of the learned Putschius of Antwerp.

† Ennodius, bishop of Pavia, his contemporary, Ep. l. viii. ep. 1.

‡ Variar. l. i. ep. 45.

BOOK II.

ments, and pure morality it contains, is the *Consolation of Philosophy*. It is written in prose, which is not void of elegance; interspersed with verses of considerable beauty *. It was composed during his imprisonment at Pavia, where he suffered death on a charge of which no proof was produced. In the following year 525, his father-in-law, a man also of extraordinary parts and learning, the Senator Symmachus was executed †, as participating in the supposed treason of his son.

When we consider the noble descent of these men, their talents, their endowments, their lives embellished by the virtues they had practised, the dignities they had possessed, and the admiration which they seemed to excite, we might suppose that their example would have kindled the flame of literary emulation. But intellectual torpor was too widely diffused; nor let it be forgotten, who, at the time, were the masters of the country, and what the character of their minds, though Theodoric and some others, from motives of policy, might occasionally patronize the arts. "He allowed not our children," candidly observed the Gothic lords, "to frequent the schools," and they assigned this reason, that the fear of the ferula generated cowardice.

Another writer, Ennodius, bishop of Pavia, flourished at

---

* Quæ libuit ludere in poesi, divina sane sunt: nihil illis cultius, nihil gravius. Scaliger, l. vi. Poet.—See Bib. Lat. t. II.

† Procop. de Bello Goth, l. i. c.1. Anon. Vales. ad calum. Amm. Marcel.

the same time. Italy and France have contended for the honour of his birth. When in pursuing another subject, some years ago, I read a work of Ennodius, my observation on it was, that he possessed some strength of imagination, but no powers of reasoning, no clearness of ideas, and no elegance of language. A further perusal of his works *, which are composed of *Letters*, *Miscellanies*, *Declamations*, and *Poems*, and from which I now rise with weariness, have only served to corroborate the opinion which I had previously formed. He ranks with the orators and first scholars of the age; but the term rhetorician would best define his character. Amongst his miscellanies is a *Panegyric*, which was spoken before Theodoric; it is fulsome and declamatory. The military exploits, the virtues, the literary taste, and the personal beauty of the king, are gorgeously displayed. "The snow on his cheeks," he says, "is in harmony with their rosy blush, and his eyes beam with the serenity of a perpetual spring." In his *Letters* is little that is interesting; and the *Declamations*, in imitation of those falsely ascribed to Quintilian, are no more than school exercises. Ennodius, who seems to have written most when he was young, was not without talents. His perceptions were lively, but his pedantry and affectation are intolerable, and the general construction of his sentences is so perplexed as to baffle comprehension. In the poetical department, in which he wrote hymns, epigrams, and other pieces, he certainly excelled most; and it was his wish, it seems, to be thought a poet, when the subjects before him would hardly bear even

* In Bibl. Patrum, t. vi.

BOOK II.

the ordinary ornaments of prose. Ennodius was admired by his contemporaries; and in a Roman synod, whilst he was in deacon's orders, he delivered a discourse in defence of Pope Symmachus, who had been charged with crimes; and so charmed were the fathers with his reasoning and his eloquence, that they directed the discourse to be entered into the acts of the council, where it may now be read *. Ennodius was dead before Boetius was immured in the prisons of Pavia.

If any reliance might be placed upon the praises of such judges, it would be thought, from the Epistles of Ennodius, that the Augustan age was returned, and that eloquence had its Ciceros, and poetry its Virgils. The more temperate Cassiodorus, indeed, sometimes expresses the feeling; but where specimens are extant, we have means of ascertaining the truth of eulogy.

Ennodius wrote the *Life* of Epiphanius, who was his predecessor in the See of Pavia; and some other lives, and a few chronicles, the compositions of the time. The work of Jornandes, though an abridgment, alone deserves notice. As the production of a Goth, its style and matter may entitle it to some praise: but, considered as the work of Cassiodorus, it would add little to his fame †.

Let me add, what is an additional tribute to the fame of this great statesman, that he was equally desirous, that his

---

* Conc. Gen. t. III.

† *See Bib. Lat. t.* II.

master, who, under the influence of his counsels, had promoted the cause of letters, should be the patron of the arts. The care of Theodoric was first extended to the preservation of the buildings and other monuments in Rome and in the provinces. Proper officers were appointed for this purpose; who were afterwards to attend to the construction of new fabrics, or to the reparation of such as had fallen to decay.

But was that which has acquired the name of *Gothic* architecture now introduced? Here I must beg leave to refer the reader to the many authors who have discussed the subject, observing only, that—as the principles of just taste, by departing from the models of antiquity, had been long waning into oblivion or neglect—a foundation was laid, which was by no means inauspicious to the commencement of what is called the Gothic taste. The style of writing, which was then practised, the intricacy of combination, the minute embellishments which were so much prized, and the forced conceits which were so generally admired in the compositions of the Bishop of Pavia and most of his contemporaries, might naturally tend to generate a similar criterion of excellence in the operations of architectural art. If the simple models of antiquity could no longer please in literature, it was less likely that they would be acceptable to artificers in wood and stone.

Disastrous State of Italy.

It has been mentioned that, after the death of Theodoric in 526, his daughter Amalasuntha, as guardian to her son Athalaric, assumed the reins of government. Some explanation has been given of her views. Whilst she continued in power, Italy was flattered with the prospect of an increasing happi-

BOOK II.

ness: and as Cassiodorus was still at the helm, literature had reason to rejoice. But the young prince experienced a premature death; when the queen raised her cousin Theodotus, a man of science and a disciple of Plato, to a participation in the throne. The philosopher was void of gratitude as well as military experience: Amalasuntha was exiled; and, by his orders, or with his consent, was put to death *.

To revenge, as he pretended, the death of Amalasuntha, or rather to recover Italy from the hands of the Goths, the Grecian Emperor Justinian directed his general to turn his arms against Theodotus. This general was the celebrated Belisarius, who had just conquered the Vandals, and re-annexed Africa to the imperial throne. He first subdued Sicily, which was then possessed by the Goths, and landed in Italy in 536. Thus commenced the Gothic war †, which was waged with desolating fury, and lasted seventeen years. It is said, Italy did not, for several centuries, cease to feel its calamitous effects.

Theodotus soon fell, and Vitiges taking the command, boldly made a vigorous stand against the imperial general. Rome was in the hands of Belisarius; but it was soon surrounded by a powerful army of Goths, and reduced to extreme distress. But on this occasion the fortune of Belisarius

* Procop. de Bel. Goth. l. i. c. iii. iv.

† See Procopius, Jornandes, and the Historia Miscel.

prevailed; and the siege was raised. The havoc of war was now diffused over the face of the country, and few cities were exempted from its rage. In 540 Vitiges, being taken in Ravenna, was conveyed to Constantinople, whither he was accompanied by Belisarius, who had been recalled under the suspicion of aspiring to the sovereignty of Italy. Within a few months, two other kings accepted and lost the precarious sceptre, when Totila, more worthy to command, was called to the dangerous pre-eminence.

Fortune appeared to favour the enterprizing valour of the new sovereign, who recaptured cities, defeated armies, and destroyed fleets. But Belisarius returned, while Totila, who had in vain entreated the Romans to renew their allegiance, was preparing to surround their city. He actually accomplished the blockade, which he continued with so much rigour, that a dreadful famine soon began to rage within the walls; and when all attempts to relieve the city had proved unsuccessful, the Goths were treacherously admitted within the gates. The historian tells us, that little blood was shed; but the most unbounded licence of plunder was permitted to the soldiers, and every thing valuable became their prey. Even Rome herself, upon which the epithet *eternal* had been so presumptuously bestowed, seemed fast approaching to her final doom, with her palaces, her temples, her theatres, and all her gorgeous monuments. When Totila could obtain no favourable answer from the Byzantine court, to which he had respectfully applied, he resolved to wreak his vengeance where it would be most signally felt. He threw down a third part of the wall; and the fire was ready to consume the most stately buildings, when he received letters from Belisarius. He earnestly be-

BOOK II. sought the Gothic sovereign to spare the city, which the labour of ages had contributed to adorn; and said that he who by the destruction of its venerable edifices, should deprive posterity of the pleasure of beholding them, must be deemed an enemy to mankind. The king desisted from the execution of his purpose, if it had been ever seriously entertained; and taking with him the senators, and ordering what remained of the citizens to be sent, under a strong guard, into Campania, he marched away with his army*.

I shall not pursue the thread of this melancholy story. After a further resistance of six years, Totila was finally defeated by Narses, who had succeeded to Belisarius; and he died of his wounds. This happened in 552. The Goths, who had chosen Teia for their leader, still attempted all that courage and desperation could effect. Their fate, however, was not long suspended. A bloody battle was finally fought, in which Teia fell; and the nation submitted to the superior fortune of Narses. Thus ended the dominion of the Goths in Italy, in the twenty-sixth year of the reign of Justinian, the eighteenth of the Gothic war, and of the christian æra 553, after they had reigned sixty-four years from Theodoric to Teia.

The Reign of the Lombards.

Italy was now once more in the hands of a polished nation, and governed by the victorious and virtuous Narses, who was saluted by the flattering title of her deliverer. She had need of that repose, which, under his powerful protection, she

* Procop. l. III. c. 22.

might well hope to obtain; and in the same auspicious circumstances, the renewed intercourse with Greece seemed not unlikely to restore a portion of her former intellectual vigour; and to rekindle the love of letters and of the arts. But was it probable, that the Byzantine court, which was itself menaced by surrounding nations, would be able to afford protection? Was it probable, that the barbaric thrones, now firmly established in the countries of Europe, would quietly permit Constantinople to enjoy, without further molestation, her newly acquired territory? Was it probable, that the northern tribes would attempt no new inroads on that envied soil, which had already proved so alluring to their propensities for conquest and rapine?

The government of Narses was as pacific, as the agitation which had been caused by the late dreadful storms would permit; but little could be effected in the short period of fourteen years. In 567, he was recalled by Justin, the successor of Justinian; and, in the following year, Longinus, with the title of *Exarch*, fixed his seat at Ravenna. The majesty of the Western Emperor was represented by him and his successors in the same office; and they continued to enjoy some authority for the space of a hundred and eighty-three years, or from 568 to 751; when Ravenna was taken, and the last Exarch compelled to retire.

Longinus had scarcely arrived, when it was reported, that a new nation of invaders was proceeding from Pannonia and the adjacent countries. These were the Lombards, with many allies, and with their wives, children, flocks, and property,

BOOK II.

under the conduct of Alboin, a renowned warrior. It has been confidently asserted, that he was instigated to the enterprize by Narses, who was indignant at the usage which he had experienced from the imperial court. The Lombards entered the country without any opposition; and having taken many cities, and caused much desolation, they finally established their seat of government at Pavia, which had submitted, after an obstinate resistance of more than three years.

Thus commenced the reign of the Lombards, which (with the short interruption of ten years, during which a species of federal government, under certain *dukes*, prevailed), continued, in a long succession of kings, down to the year 774 *.

State of Learning.

It has been made a question among some learned Italians †, whether the Lombards were as barbarous in their manners, and as cruel in their warfare, as they are generally represented; and whether, under their sway, Italy enjoyed security, or was harassed by unceasing oppression. That the state of learning was deplorable no one is ready to deny; and I know not, that the accession of any new cause was necessary to accelerate the extinction of taste, which has been already de-

* See Paulus Diaconus *De Gestis Langobardorum*, l. II. Rer. Ital. t. I.—He was himself a Lombard, and wrote his History, under Charlemagne, in the eighth century.

† See Muratori *Ann. d'Ital.* pass. Tiraboschi, *Stor. del. Lett.* t. III.

scribed. But when we take into the account, not the first aggression of the Lombards, but the intestine wars which were waged, between them and the cities which persevered in their allegiance to the Byzantine throne; with the consequent ravage and solicitude; with the manners of a people, not less ferocious, nor less illiterate than the Goths, when they first entered Italy, we behold an increased mass of causes in action to depress every liberal pursuit, and stifle every intellectual exertion. The name of no one Lombard king, as the historian of Italian literature observes *, merits a place in the annals of letters. The princes of the Gothic line, if Theodoric may be excepted, had themselves few pretensions to any thing like literary distinction, but they could value learning in others; and it has been seen, what place in their councils was occupied by Cassiodorus and Boetius. Or was it that, when the Goths reigned, letters had not ceased to be cultivated, and men of eminence could be found; whilst under the government of the Lombards, ignorance had become more indissolubly conjoined with barbarism?

The writers, in general, who speak of those times, are not sparing of their severity; and none are less indulgent than those of Rome, who, as their city obeyed the Exarch, often suffered from the hostile inroads of the Lombards. The virulence of their expressions is sometimes extreme. Their countryman and historian †, Paul Winfrid, took a very different view of the state of things, and the character of the Lom-

* T. III. p. 87.

† Paul. Diac. l. III. c. 16.

BOOK II.

bards. He does not indeed celebrate their love of science, or their patronage of the arts; but he draws an enchanting picture of the administration of the provinces, under their third king. "No violence," says he, "was here committed, no snares were laid: no one was molested, no one spoiled: there was no rapine, no thefts: but all, void of apprehension, followed their several occupations in security." It is in such circumstances that letters and the arts prosper, when other incitements are not wanting to promote their cultivation. But such incitements did not exist in the times of which we are speaking.

We read little of public schools; and books which had not been in great abundance at any time, had been rendered still more scarce, by the pillage of cities and the destruction of monasteries. The Lombards, says the historian*, invading Mount-Casino, laid every thing waste, when the monks escaped "with a copy of their holy institute, and a few other writings." Industry would have resupplied the means of instruction, had not the military habits of many, and the pressing exigencies of penury in others, with the continual dread of hostile attacks, effectually suppressed every tendency to intellectual improvement. I must be understood to allude principally to the remains of the old inhabitants of the country, few of whom were now free from Gothic contamination; and nothing, certainly, can be more deplorable than the account transmitted to us of the state of Rome by her

* Idem. l. IV. c. 18.

bishop St. Gregory*, who witnessed the scenes of distress which attended the progress of the Lombard arms. "All is lost," he says, "and swept away. Our population is dwindled to an inconsiderable number, and the sword of the enemy, aided by innumerable miseries, accelerates the decrease. Nor do men alone perish; the public edifices, the monuments of our ancient grandeur are every day falling into ruin. There was a time, when the youth of foreign countries crowded to these walls to learn the sciences, and to claim their rewards. Alas! no one repairs now for instruction or advancement to a city, which resounds only with lamentation, and which is, in fact, no better than a desert."

What then could be expected? The greater part of the country was subject to a nation, regardless of learning, if not wholly ignorant of its name: the remainder was occupied by the needy dependents on the Byzantine court, whose attention was engrossed by considerations very different from those of intellectual improvement. Learning, in all its branches, left without patronage, without encouragement, withered away like a tree in a frozen wild; and it is in vain that we look, through the annals of the times, for a single literary production, which the philosopher, the historian, the poet, or any man of the smallest classical pretensions could, for a moment, peruse with satisfaction.

The historian†, whom I have often quoted, and whose in-

* See Op. Sti. Greg. pass.

† Tiraboschi Storia della Letter. t. III.

BOOK II. dustrious researches into the state of learning were animated by a laudable partiality to his country, here almost suspends his progress in despair. The times, indeed, says he, were times of misery and universal desolation, when even the common appellations, which are given to the followers of science, were barely understood; and when a man, who could write Latin with any purity, who knew a few words of Greek, or could make verses, was deemed a prodigy. He then proceeds, with his usual accuracy, to investigate, under each head, the state of letters, and rescues a few names from oblivion which had not been utterly lost; but it was only to prove, that oblivion was the state to which they must return, and that the age, which could value such writers, was one of profound ignorance and general barbarism.

Though the condition of polite learning was in such an abject state, are we to presume, that the studies connected with religion were equally neglected *? While these are upheld in any repute, the art of elegant composition may be overlooked; but many branches of valuable knowledge must be cultivated, and it should seem that that eloquence, which was here connected with the best interests of man, can never want encouragement.

Ecclesiastical studies are not, it must be confessed, without a claim upon our gratitude. They served to keep alive the spirit of inquiry; and they preserved the Latin language from utter extinction, whilst they helped to soften the barba-

* See the *Bibliothecâ Patrum* pass.

rous manners of the northern tribes. They imposed some restraint on the universal tendency to the use of arms; they allured less ardent minds to the occupations of retirement; within the churches and in the monasteries, they opened receptacles for such works of profane and sacred lore, as had escaped the ravage of war. The monastic institution caused many hands to be employed in multiplying or beautifying copies. They might themselves often not know the value of their treasures, and might expend labour on what merited only neglect; but still they contributed to preserve many works which would otherwise have perished.

Amongst the churchmen of this age, whose writings are not undeserving of attention, and which are characterized by an air of majesty and a tone of eloquence, which would not have disgraced times of higher cultivation, I must not omit to mention Gregory, the first of the name, who, from the year 590 to 604, occupied the chair of St. Peter. The appellation of *Great*, by which he is best distinguished, attests the opinion which was entertained of his general character; but does not the appellation, at the same time, prove, that when *one* man merited to be so distinguished, his contemporaries had few claims to notice: and that the standard of general excellence was very low? Whilst in extolling the literary character of St. Gregory, some writers have, perhaps, been too lavish of their praise, others have not hesitated to represent him, as no less hostile to polite learning and the arts, than were the Lombards themselves, on whose barbarous manners he often animadverts in his epistles. The charges against him are reduced to the following heads; that he expelled from Rome the mathematical studies; that he burnt the Palatine library, first collected

by Augustus Cæsar; that himself despised classical learning, which he forbad others to pursue; and that he destroyed many profane monuments of art, with which the city had been embellished.

These are serious charges, and have been vigorously maintained: but the grounds on which they rest, appear to me so weak, and to have been so triumphantly refuted, that I see little necessity for prosecuting the same subject*, and shall dismiss it with the observation, that if the age had possessed more men as well entitled as St. Gregory certainly was to the reputation of virtue, of science, and of literature, the reign of the Lombards in Italy would not have been synonymous with the reign of barbarism. Rome, indeed, was not under their dominion; but the reader has beheld the operation of the various causes which gradually occasioned the decline of letters, and to which an increased energy was communicated by the martial ferocity of the Lombards.

I do not mean to insinuate, that the immediate successors of Gregory were all destitute of literary accomplishments, though, in an age of ignorance, but little attention is due to the eulogy of contemporaries. Toward the close of the seventh century, when Agatho was bishop of Rome, we have irrefragable proof of the low state of ecclesiastical learning. A Roman synod was convened to deliberate on certain communications

* See Tiraboschi, t. III. p. 104—125, who, with great acuteness and solidity of reasoning, replies to the arguments of the German Brucker, Hist. Crit. Philos. t. III. l. II. c. 2.

which had been received from Constantinople; and it was agreed to send deputies into the East with letters to the Emperor from the Pontiff and the Council. The deputies were seven, bishops and priests; and as the synod was numerously attended, we may fairly presume, that they were selected with care. "It is not," says Agatho, "from any confidence, which we place in their knowledge; for how can the perfect science of the scriptures be found amongst men, who live in the midst of a barbarous people, and with difficulty earn their bread by the labour of their hands? It is only with simplicity of heart, that we preserve the faith delivered to us by our fathers." With these delegates, he adds, that he had sent such books and extracts as might be necessary to explain the faith of the apostolic church, and he entreats the emperor to give an indulgent hearing "to their illiterate expositions." The substance of the second letter is of similar import. The bishops speak of their learning, in the same humble strain; which, in truth, the style of the letter sufficiently attests, observing that, "at this time, no one among them can boast of worldly eloquence *."

It cannot be doubted, that this humble representation of the learning of the Roman church was extorted by the force of truth; for, in all intercourse with the East, and particularly at this time, when the rival sees had been warmly contending for pre-eminence, no example can be found of gratuitous self-abasement. What then must have been the learning of other

* Ap. Baron. Annal. Eccl. ad. an. 680.

BOOK II. churches, if that of Rome, by her own confession to an inveterate adversary, was reduced so low?

More than half a century after this, king Pepin of France requested some books from the Pontiff, Paul I. "I have sent to you," replied his Holiness, "what books I could find." To such a benefactor as Pepin had been to the Apostolic See, the selection, doubtless, was as munificent as goodwill and gratitude could make it. The libraries, however, of Rome could supply nothing more valuable than an *Antiphonale* and a *Responsale*, a *Grammatica Aristotelis* (a work not known), *Dionysii Areopagitæ Libros, Geometrian, Orthographian, Grammaticam*," all Greek writers*. When only such works as these, whether spurious or authentic, could be offered or accepted, no farther researches after proofs of complete barbarism need be made.

This miserable state of letters was, doubtless, not more favourable in that of the fine arts. The devastation which had been caused by the inveterate contest between the Greeks and the Gothic kings, continued with equal fury between the Lombards and the Greeks. The rapacity of the Greeks, at the same time, kept pace with the barbarism of the Lombards; and they might well reason, that, when an occasion offered, it was allowable for them to make reprisals on Rome, and recover some portion of the valuable property of which their country had been formerly despoiled. In 663, the Emperor

* Codex Carolin. vol. I.

Constans repaired to Rome, where, having presented to the blessed Peter a richly ornamented mantle, he employed the twelve days of his visit, in collecting the ancient monuments of bronze, and the tiles of that metal, with which the Pantheon was covered; which he directed to be conveyed to Constantinople*. They fell into the hands of the Saracens.

We are informed that there were artists among the Lombards, and that they built many palaces, churches, and monasteries, which they enriched with ornaments, statues, and pictures; but the remains of these incontestably prove the rudeness of their workmanship and the imperfections of their skill. Besides, when we consider that he who could write his name was viewed as a prodigy, the meanest artist might readily command admiration in such a barbarous age. In describing the various fabrics of the Roman bishops who, at this time, sat in the chair of St. Peter, their historian dwells with complacency on "their grandeur and beauty†!"

The End of the Lombard Government.

The causes which finally overturned the government of the Lombards, are involved in obscurity and confusion; but the unwise measures of its own rulers, the distracted councils of the Byzantine cabinet, and the deep policy of the Roman court, contributed to its fall. Early in the eighth century, the throne of Pavia was occupied by Liutprand, who was endowed with many virtues, and was accounted next to Rotharis, the chief lawgiver of his nation. Ambition was his ruling pas-

* Paul. Diac. l. v. c. 11.

† See Anast. Bibliothec. passim.

BOOK II.

sion. Not satisfied with the extensive territories left to him by his predecessors, and with seeing them prosper under his new laws—the wisdom of which is the theme of strenuous commendation*—he undertook to expel the Romans, as they were called, that is, the forces of the Grecian Empire, from the soil of Italy. His arms were attended with success; but it roused the jealousy of the Roman bishops, who were apprehensive of being reduced under the power of a people whom they had always professed to despise, and of losing the chance, however remote, of one day acquiring the possession of the dukedom of Rome, and the cities of the Exarchate. In this posture of affairs, when no military aid against the Lombards could be obtained from Constantinople, and when its edicts against the worship of images excited the utmost indignation in Rome, Gregory, the second of the name, implored the protection of the French king. This sovereign was the celebrated Charles Martel, who promised, if necessary, to march into Italy †.

After the death of Liutprand in 743, in whom, if we may believe his historian, "letters" alone were wanting to constitute a perfect prince, the sceptre was held, for a few months, by Hildebrand, and afterwards by Rachis. New laws were added by Rachis to the code, which was already sufficiently voluminous. He then pursued the ambitious plans of Liutprand, which, however, the eloquent address of the Roman

---

* See Rer. Ital. t. I. p. II. Antiq. Ital. vol. II. Diss. XXII.

† Paul. Diac. l. VI. Greg. Turon.

bishop Zachary, induced him to relinquish, when, putting on the habit of St. Benedict, he retired to Mount Casino. His brother Astulphus was his successor. With him the kingdom rose to its highest elevation, He subjected the Exarchate, and invaded the dukedom of Rome, when the Pontiff, Stephen II. who had in vain applied to Constantinople for relief, had recourse, like his predecessors, to the French monarch, whom, Astulphus, in a moment of inconsideration, permitted him to visit. Pepin, the son of Charles Martel, was seated on the Gallic throne. In this interview, and during the stay which Stephen made in France, a plan of operations was adjusted; and when, after an interval of some months, Astulphus would listen to no terms, a French army, with their king, crossed the Alps; laid siege to Pavia; and compelled the Lombard to accept the terms of peace, which were generously offered, and to surrender his conquests *.

But when the enemy was out of sight, Astulphus perfidiously revoked the concessions he had made, and marched against Rome. Stephen once more implored foreign aid; and again the armies of France came to his assistance. Astulphus now consented to fulfil all the stipulations of the late treaty, according to which, under a solemn instrument of donation previously settled by Pepin, "the Exarchate, with its dependent cities, is made over in perpetuity to the Roman Pontiff, and his successors in the chair of Peter †." The temporal sceptre was thus added to the spiritual keys; the sovereignty

* Lib. Pontif. in Steph. † Ibid.

BOOK II.

to the priesthood; and the bishops of Rome were aggrandized by the spoils of the Lombard kings, and of the descendants of Constantine. This was in the year 755.

Astulphus did not long survive this event; and as he left no male issue, the vacant throne became the object of a vigorous contest between Duke Desiderius, and the monk Rachis, whom the lustre of the sceptre allured from the retirement of Mount Casino. Desiderius proved the successful combatant; and, during several years, enjoyed, in some measure, a tranquil reign: but differences arose between him and the Roman court, when the son of Pepin, Charles, who was afterwards called Charlemagne, marched into Italy; sat down before Pavia; visited Rome in solemn pomp, where he confirmed to the Pontiff the donation of his father; and returning to the Lombard capital, compelled it to surrender. Desiderius, who fell into the hands of the conqueror, was sent into Gaul. Thus ended the kingdom of the Lombards, after a continuance of more than two hundred years; and in the summer of the year 774, the ruler of the Franks became the monarch of Italy.

While the powers of mind lay every-where in a state of torpid inertness, it will readily be understood, why the pages of ecclesiastical history in this period are so barren of events. Even the active controversies of the East, excited by the Nestorians, the Eutychians, the Monothelites, and recently by the Iconoclasts, would have excited little interest, if the Roman bishop, as first pastor of the church, had not deemed it his duty to interfere. Metaphysical theology could take little hold of their gross conceptions. To the question of

image-worship, however, which was more palpable to sense, the western people were not indifferent. The reason which induced most of the Gothic nations, soon after their settlements, to embrace the Arian tenets, may be found in the character of their instructors; and when Arianism, or any other doctrine, had taken hold of such minds, they were likely to adhere to it with obstinate tenacity.

Though the condition of Latin literature, as we have seen it in Italy, sufficiently mark the level to which it was reduced in other regions of the west, I must not omit a few names, not unfamiliar to many readers, and whose learning, such as it was, was usefully employed in recording facts, and in diffusing a scanty portion of general knowledge.

French Writers.

In the sixth century lived Gregory of Tours, the father of French and of Germany story. His *Annals*, in ten books, briefly relate the general events of the church to the foundation of the Gallic monarchy, and thence proceed, in a more copious narration, ecclesiastical and civil, to the year 591, soon after which he died. We are certainly under many obligations to this good archbishop, though the simplicity and credulity of his character have often been unfavourable to the cause of truth. His style is rude, vulgar, and barbarous; his sentences dissonant, and his words not always Latin. His writings exhibit the exact lineaments of the age. When they are read, it is for the facts which they furnish; but these must be selected with caution, and that discrimination must be exercised, of which he had not the smallest share. In some other works, on the *Lives* of Saints, his credulity is not restrained

BOOK II.

within any common bounds; and he delivers the most fabulous tales as the certain documents of history *.

Since the foundation of the French monarchy by Clovis, toward the close of the fifth century, learning had everywhere experienced a more sensible decline. The Latin language, however degenerated, was succeeded by a more vulgar tongue, which was a sort of corrupt and perverted jargon of the language of ancient Rome. The mind of Clovis was only that of an uncivilized soldier; and the minds of his successors were of the same description, till we come to those weak and dissolute men, whom history has so emphatically styled *Faineans*, with whom the first race expired; and that of the Carlovingians, commenced in the person of Pepin, the son of Charles Martel, in the year 751. The manners and tastes of the people were not less gross than those of the prince; and with the exception of some churchmen, but few aspired to any other praise than that of martial prowess. Letters were despised, as adapted only to the sluggish habits of the cloister. In these cloisters schools were still open, and some means of instruction were offered to the public.

But the age could boast of a poet, Venantius Forturatus, a native of Italy, afterwards bishop of Poitiers, and the friend of the Roman Gregory, to whom eleven books of poems are

* Bib. P. C. t. VI. See Cave Hist. Lit. and Fabricius Bib. Lat. med. ætat.

dedicated, as also four on the life of St. Martin *. The Muse of Venantius has found admirers, and his contemporaries spoke with admiration of his various talents; but he seems to have formed a truer judgment of himself. When, in lines void of all taste and purity, he describes his own defects of intellect *(ast ego sensus inops)*, we may praise his piety and self-abasement; but his poetry is not heightened by the confession. I can allow the Lombard deacon, Paul Warnefrid, to write † his panegyric, particularly as it exhibits a criterion of the literary estimate of the times; but from the mouth of a modern critic we expect a sounder verdict ‡.

I shall not dwell on the history of the Spanish government under the Gothic kings, which presents little more than scenes of internal feuds and bloodshed, with few objects on which the mind can repose with unmixed delight §. As in Italy and Gaul, the language of the northern conquerors yet prevailed, though it daily acquired more softness and a richer phraseology, by an insensible commixture with the remains of the Roman tongue; in which the service of the church was performed, and they, who had any claim to the character of scholars, continued to write.

Among the churchmen who, in the beginning of the seventh

Spanish Writers.

* Bib. P. C. t. VI. See Cave Hist. Lit. and Fabricius Bib. Lat. med. ætat.

† De Gest. Langob. l. II.

‡ Hist. Lit. sec. VI.

§ Mariana Hist. passim.

BOOK II. century, threw some lustre on the Spanish nation, must be named Isidore, archbishop of Seville, a prelate of high celebrity in the church; and whose numerous writings, ecclesiastical and profane, announced the variety of his acquirements. Passing over his historical compilations, his Commentaries on the Scriptures, his Dogmatical Tracts, his Treatises on Discipline, and those on Morals, I shall select, as more immediately belonging to my province, his twenty books of *Origins* or *Etymologies*. The work is extremely miscellaneous; but it may be considered as a just epitome of the arts and sciences, as they were then understood, in which terms are explained, principles laid down, and their uses shewn. It is plain, that Isidore had read much; but though viewed by his contemporaries as a prodigy of learning, and consulted as an oracle, his knowledge was scanty and superficial. "Heaven," observed his friend Braulio, the bishop of Saragossa, "had given him to Spain, and raised him up at that time to make the monuments of the ancients known, and to guard his countrymen from extreme rusticity and barbarism." In a style, which is not void of perspicuity, he introduces the different heads of science, which he illustrates by apt quotations. These are the "monuments of the ancients;" and as they are sometimes taken from works, which we do not now possess, their value is not inconsiderable. The fragments which their labour has preserved, have given celebrity to the names of Photius, of Suidas, and of others: and Isidore, therefore, should not be left without his due share of praise. He drew little, it may be allowed, from himself; but when he speaks of dialectics, of mathematics, of medicine, of man, of animals, of the world, of the earth, and of its parts and products, we seem to hear a philosopher of the seventh century

speak; we are enabled to appreciate his learning and that of his age; and though this be small, we are pleased with the rich and various quotations from the authors of better days*.

Nor was Isidore alone eminent in the Spanish church. He had two brothers highly famed, one of whom, Leander, preceded him in the See of Seville, who was, as we are told, a prelate "of eloquent speech, endowed with many talents, and not less signalized for science than for virtue." The Gothic nation was induced principally by his persuasive eloquence, to renounce the errors of Arius, when, says the historian †, a new light of glory seemed to spread itself over the country; peace was restored, commotions appeased, and mirth and public rejoicings were, on all sides, heard."

The seventh century was also remarkable in Spain for the several synods held, principally at Toledo; the provisions of which, on various subjects, were often judicious, when we consider the lamentable ignorance of the times. It was ordained, that no one should be promoted to clerical orders, "who was ignorant of the psalms, of the ceremonies of baptism, and of sacred song." The injunction, it must be owned, was not unreasonably severe; and we cannot be surprised, that the light of glory, of which the historian speaks, so soon passed away; when the return of civil discord facilitated the

* See Hist. Lit. sac. VII. Dupin Hist. Eccles. Brucker, t. III. Bib. Lat. med. ætat.

† Mariana Hist. l. VI. c. I.

BOOK II. conquest of the Moors, which, early in the following century, overwhelmed all the provinces, and introduced, with a new people, a new order of things.

Germany. I would not silently pass over the provinces of Germany in a language of high antiquity, and but little mingled with foreign idioms, could we discover in it any traces of knowledge which merited attention. Though their language was ancient, it seemed as yet to have served no other purposes than those of colloquial intercourse, or to perpetuate, in songs and ballads, the events of battles, or the feats, often fabulous, of some favourite chieftain. Latin, as in other countries, was almost exclusively possessed by churchmen; and what was written, in that language, did not rise to a higher standard of excellence than the productions of other countries. Even of Latin works the number was small *.

The State of England. Before I proceed to mention the ornament of our island, the venerable Bede, it may be proper to observe, that the conversion of the nation by agents from Rome, in the beginning of the seventh century, had been productive of many happy effects, in a civil point of view. The christian missionaries brought with them the learning, the language, the manners, of a people, certainly, less ignorant and barbarous than the natives to whom they came; and as their influence increased, less savage modes were likely to prevail. In speaking of the Roman conquests, I remarked the general policy of their administration, and what changes, in common with other countries, Britain had experienced under their sway. A similar revolution was now to happen. The new masters were, indeed, very

* See Leitfaden zur Geschichte der Gelehrsamkeit, vol. II.

few—compared with the Roman legions, who, at that time, were spread over the face of the country; but their powers of persuasion were such, as, within the lapse of somewhat more than half a century, to prevail on the different nations of the heptarchy to surrender the strongest prepossessions of the heart, and embrace a religion, very different from that which they had hitherto professed. Indeed, the single act of adopting a new religion, such as the christian was, involved in it a series of other changes; though it must be confessed that, where indulgence could be allowed, Pope Gregory was disposed to accommodate his discipline to the inveterate habits of the people. He directed their ancient temples to be preserved, and their days of festivity to be continued. "And as the people," he adds, in a letter to St. Augustin, "have been used to slaughter oxen in their sacrifices to devils, some feasts, on this account, must be substituted for them. Thus, on the days of the new dedication (of churches), or on the nativities of the martyrs whose relics are there deposited, they may build themselves huts of the boughs of trees round the churches, and, celebrating the solemnity with religious feasting, no more offer beasts to the devil; but kill them to the praise of God in their eating, and return thanks to the giver of all things. While some pleasures are thus outwardly permitted them, they will more easily consent to inward joys: for there is no doubt, that it is impossible to retrench all, at once, from obdurate hearts*."

* Ap. Spelman, Conc. vol. 1.

BOOK II.

St. Augustin was attended in his pious expedition by no more than forty Italians; but, from this time, a constant intercourse with Rome was established; and the bishops and other ministers, as well at Canterbury as in other sees, were in a long succession delegated from the same quarter. As they were unacquainted with the barbarous language of the people, we do not readily understand by what means they communicated their instructions; but the many inconveniences arising from this ignorance of the vernacular tongue, would compel them—as it had the Romans in an earlier period—to open schools, where children, at least, would be taught the rudiments of Latin; while some of the strangers might, themselves, attempt to surmount the difficulties of the Saxon idiom. But at any rate the schools which I mentioned, would seem to diffuse the Latin language. The performance of the church-service in that tongue would add to the effect; and the admiration, in which the new teachers, with their various endowments, would naturally be held, could not fail to recommend whatever they practised, or enjoined, to general imitation. But when, in process of time, the natives of the island, having acquired the necessary qualifications, were promoted to ecclesiastical offices, greater changes would be produced by the influence of their counsels and example; for, we may be confident, that those persons were principally selected, who, in their education and habits, had manifested a striking preference of Roman manners. In the mean time, as the first teachers and their successors, were monks, they had brought the spirit of monachism with them; and convents were every-where founded, which served as other schools of instruction to the natives, and as semi-

naries of ultramontane taste and discipline. This we learn from the annals of the times.

The attempts which were made to reconcile the remains of the British inhabitants to the measures of Rome, did not succeed; but the causes were obvious. The Saxons were objects of their implacable animosity, and, therefore, their new friends, the strangers from Italy, who espoused their interest, were viewed with similar aversion. Insulated by nature, and, as the Romans withdrew, daily more and more cut off from all intercourse with the continent, the Britons retained, with the peculiar character of their faith and discipline, the manners and maxims which they had imbibed; and these they took with them, when compelled by the Saxon conquerors to retire for refuge to the mountains of Wales. They besides took the little learning which had survived the general wreck. When Augustin sought and obtained a conference with them, seven British bishops, we are told, and many learned men, met him, chiefly from the noble monastery of Bangor, in Flintshire*. Here more than two thousand monks resided, "who lived by the labour of their hands;" and here, we may presume, that the monuments which remained of their former learning were preserved.

Of the six archbishops who, in succession, had filled the chair of Canterbury, the last only, Deusdedit, was of Saxon origin; but it was the wish, as it appeared, of the country,

* Beda Hist. Eccles. l. II. c. 2.

BOOK II.

that their future prelates should be chosen from among themselves, and, with this view, an ecclesiastic, named Wighard, was sent to Rome. Here he died; when, after some deliberation, an African abbot, from the neighbourhood of Naples, was recommended to the pontiff, learned in the holy scriptures, versed in monastic and ecclesiastical discipline, and, what was more, "excellently skilled in the Greek and Latin tongues." But this ecclesiastic, whose name was Adrian, declined the honour, and recommended his friend Theodore, a monk, and a native of Tarsus in Cilicia, "well-instructed in secular and divine learning, also in the Greek and Latin languages, a man besides of exemplary probity, as well as venerable for his age, being sixty-six years old." Theodore being ordained by the Roman bishop, departed for his see, in company with Adrian, who was directed not only to accompany his friend, but to watch his conduct, lest, from partiality to the Greeks, he should introduce any thing contrary to the Roman faith*.

The appointment of an Asiatic prelate, with an African counsellor, to preside over a Saxon church, to the language and manners of which they were utter strangers, was a curious incident. On his arrival in Britain about the year 670, Theodore visited all parts of the island; and he was everywhere well received. Bennet Biscop, a Saxon youth, who had also accompanied him from Rome, officiated as his interpreter. By his aid, christian admonitions were largely distributed;

* Beda Hist. Eccles. l. iv. c. 1.

but Theodore had moreover brought with him many Greek and Latin books, among which was a beautiful copy of Homer, the Homilies of Chrysostom, and other works. He deemed it not beneath the dignity of his sacred office to excite a taste for letters; and, with this view, in conjunction with his friend Adrian, he delivered lectures, to the most crowded audiences, which his exertions could procure. He blended more serious disquisitions with subjects of a lighter character. The historian* observes, that as a proof of the effects which those honourable labourers produced, when he himself wrote, individuals were found amongst the scholars of those learned masters, to whom the Latin and Greek languages were as familiar, as their native tongue. He adds that the times were never more happy. But the art of singing—which Pope Gregory had introduced, and which his missionaries brought with them into the island—was now become an essential part of ecclesiastical education; and a proficiency in this accomplishment was esteemed a distinguished excellence. So highly, indeed, was it valued; that heaven, it was said†, sometimes vouchsafed to bestow it on its peculiar favourites. Music (even though as deficient in melody as the Gregorian song) might please the ears of a barbarous people, and allure them to the church: but, at this period, it occupied in all countries more attention than it merited; and contributed not a little to increase the distaste for more serious and more important studies‡.

* Beda Hist. Eccles. l. IV. c. 2. † Ibid. c. 24.

‡ Brucker, Hist. Phil. t. III. l. II. c. 2.

BOOK II. The appointment then of Theodore to the primacy, when we look to its effects, was singularly fortunate. He held this high office for two-and-twenty years. His death happened in 690, when he was succeeded by Berthwald, a Saxon monk, who, as the historian tells us, was well skilled in ecclesiastical and monastic discipline; but very inferior to Theodore in literary and intellectual qualifications. Adrian survived his friend many years, and, in the monastery of which he was abbot, continued the mode of instruction, which he so prosperously began. But, in speaking of his successor Albin, Bede remarks *, that, with his ecclesiastical learning, he possessed "no small portion" of the Greek language; and was as well acquainted with Latin as with his own tongue. We may, therefore, suspect, notwithstanding the former broad assertion, that the lectures of the Greek masters were not always crowned with so much success as has been represented. Another of their scholars was Aldhelm, an abbot and afterwards bishop, who is reported to have composed the first work in Latin, and to have taught his countrymen the rules of its prosody. He was a man, says the historian †, clear and elegant in his language, and astonishingly versed in sacred and profane literature, of which he left specimens in various publications.

Bede. Contemporary, or nearly contemporary with these sages of the heptarchy, was Bede, who from his superior learning and admirable virtues, received in his life-time the appellation of

* L. v. c. 21. † L. v. c. 19.

Venerable. He was born in the county Palatine of Durham, within the domain of two neighbouring monasteries; under the superiors of which he was educated from his earliest youth, and where, becoming a monk, he lived, taught, and died. His first instructor was the abbot Bennet Biscop, the interpreter of Theodore when he first came into England; and who had probably imbibed a love of letters from his lectures and conversation. The proficiency of Bede in all the branches of learning, and in the Greek and Latin languages, was certainly considerable; and while we admire his acquirements, we are inclined to suppose that there were others, amongst his brethren, pursued the same course; and that the late primate and his African friend had been able to excite a spirit of intellectual cultivation, the beneficial effects of which were extensively diffused. The continued intercourse with Rome, also, among a people emerging from barbarism, would serve to animate curiosity, and to multiply the competitors for intellectual distinction. Bede thus speaks of himself: "My life was spent within the precincts of the same monastery, devoted to the meditation of the divine word; and where, in the observance of conventual discipline and the songs of the choir, it was ever pleasing to me to learn, to teach, or to write." He adds, that his days were passed in these occupations till he arrived at the age of fifty-nine; and he gives a list of the various works which he compiled*.

The fame of the Saxon monk, before he had reached his

* Epit. Hist. Eccles.

BOOK II.

thirtieth year, had penetrated to distant countries; and Pope Sergius, requested that he might be sent to confer with him in some pressing exigencies of the church. But Bede did not quit his cell. It was a subject of astonishment that such treasures of science should be found "in a remote corner of the globe." The superiors of these northern convents, indeed, seem themselves to have been men of talents. They collected books, improved the style of architecture, and were the first who made use of glass in the construction of windows. So says the historian*. Engaged in such society, and interested by the progress of the arts, Bede might naturally prefer the calm seclusion of his monastery to the more brilliant attractions of a journey to Rome. The number of his pupils was besides great; and, he attended to their instruction to his dying hour, solving difficulties, and proposing questions for their exercise. His last labour was employed upon the gospel of St. John, which, for the improvement of those who were little versed in Latin, he expounded in the Saxon tongue. Bede died in 735.

If the fame of such a master attracted many scholars, we might naturally expect a succession of men of learning; and an increased diffusion of knowledge. But the historian whom I have quoted, and who flourished in the beginning of the twelfth century, observes†: "with Bede was buried almost the entire knowledge of events down to our own times. No Englishman, emulous of his learning, or pleased with his elegance, was

* Wil. Malmesb. l. 2. c. 3. † Ibid.

anxious to follow his steps. Some, not altogether void of letters, passed their days without leaving any record of their talents; others, not masters of the first elements, indulged in a torpid sloth. Thus the indolent were succeeded by a race still more indolent than they; and, for a long period, the love of letters was no where to be found. Of this what stronger evidence can be demanded, than the lines of the contemptible epitaph inscribed on the tomb of Bede?

Presbyter hic Beda, etc.

"In the monastery, which was, while he lived, justly deemed the school of general science, could no one be found qualified to celebrate the praises of his master, in language more worthy of the subject?"

Since that time more justice has been done to the memory of Bede, and more elegant Latinity has been employed in his encomium. Amongst his panegyrists, the monk of Malmesbury, whilst dwelling with admiration on the number and character of his works, hesitates not to say that "heaven had encircled his mind with copious streams of inspiration." The works themselves contain the least ambiguous testimony of their value. They are, certainly, numerous, and on various subjects; evincing extensive reading; an unbounded range of curiosity; unwearied industry; and great facility of composition. But judicious selection, nice discrimination, or critical exactness, are not to be expected; when, whatever might be the subject, sacred or profane, the highest proof of talents and of erudition was supposed to be furnished by a promiscuous accumulation of opinions and authorities. Hence the commen-

BOOK II.

taries of Bede on the Scriptures are formed of extracts from the fathers; and his philosophy flowed from a borrowed source. The *Ecclesiastical History* of England, in five books, from the coming of Julius Cæsar to the year 731, is his only work which is now read. He candidly cites the authorities, on which his narrative rests, and as these were sometimes oral, they might be fallacious; but no better could be found. The credulity of Bede is seen in the admission of idle tales into a history, which, in other respects, merits the highest praise. For my part, I should lament, had the historian of those times been guided, in the selection of his materials, by a more discriminating scepticism; for we should have wanted a just transcript of the age in which he lived; and might even have doubted the authenticity of the composition. As it is, we see what was at that period the superstitious character of our ancestors; and in the historian we behold a man, endowed with great talents, and possessed of extraordinary erudition, but in those habits of his mind—in which virtue was not concerned—not less weak nor credulous than his contemporaries. Such is sometimes the lot of individuals of great learning and talents, till knowledge, more generally diffused, has dissipated prejudices, broken the iron mace of superstition, and rendered the horizon of science more spacious and serene. The style of Bede is sufficiently perspicuous and flowing, but not always pure, and seldom elegant.

The Works principally read in the Schools.

As works of really classical taste are barely mentioned by Bede, it is probable, that he had read few, and that, in his public lectures, he proposed them not as models for imitation. What was the degree of his proficiency in the Greek language, does not distinctly appear; though, as observed, he

speaks highly of the acquirements of many of his contemporaries, who had been the scholars of Theodore and Adrian. It may then be asked, what authors were generally read in the English and other schools? The reply is not easy; but the subject has been carefully investigated *.

The recent and high authority of St. Gregory appears to have thrown discredit on the elegant productions of heathen writers, and to have substituted others, which were less dangerous to orthodox piety. Among these his own *Moral* writings seem to have held a conspicuous place, though, as he owns, they were compiled "without regard to the rules of grammar," and with some affectation of barbarism. Of his *Dialogues*, I may add, that, as they were written purposely to excite the attention of an unlettered age, they would provoke imitation; and, probably, in addition to the general taste, they were no small inducement to Bede, to encumber his history with so many tales.

In *Moral* philosophy the works of St. Gregory became a sort of classical text, to which passages were added from other fathers, particularly from the works of St. Augustin. The erudition of this great man naturally commanded respect; and his acuteness in disputation caused him to be regarded as a complete master in the dialectic art. It has, however, since been proved, that the work, which was in most request, was not the genuine production of the bishop of Hippo; and had it been otherwise, though the principles of accurate reasoning

* Bricker, Hist. Crit. t. iii. p. 2, c. 2.

BOOK II.

might have been learned from it, the general ruggedness of his style and the involution of his sentences, with other blemishes of African origin, must have evinced, how unfit he was to reform a vitiated taste; or rather to exhibit to the barbarous tribes of Europe, a perfect model of correct and elegant composition.

In *Philology*, Marcianus Capella was the guide, a native also of Africa, who, in the fifth century, wrote a Treatise, in nine books, on the liberal arts. In the succeeding centuries, this work was read with general applause; when the asperity of its style could best accord with the rude taste of Gothic ears. It became a school-book, in which the grammarian, as Gregory of Tours* observes, learned the rules of construction; the logician to arrange his arguments; the orator to persuade; the geometrician to trace his lines; the astrologer to watch the courses of the stars; the arithmetician to fix his numbers, and the lover of harmony to adopt his words to the modulation of musical sounds. And it was afterwards observed of this favourite work, that he, who possessed its contents, might be deemed a master of the whole circle of the sciences. Capella was undoubtedly a man of learning, and his compilation recorded many opinions which were derived from early times; but a deep shade of obscurity was thrown over the whole, and rendered it, without a commentator, peculiarly unfit to enlighten the students of a barbarous age †.

The works of Cassiodorus and Boetius, particularly of the

---

* In fine, lib. x. Hist. Franc.

† See Bib. Lat. t. II.

latter, were much studied. They were both, considering the age in which they lived, writers of elegance, and abounding in valuable information. Ignorant as men had, at this period, become of the Greek language, they drew from Boetius some knowledge of its treasures; and his own maxims became, as they well deserved, the canons of their philosophy. Our Alfred, it is known, translated into the Saxon tongue the celebrated *Consolation of Philosophy*. Boetius had likewise written on music, which, as it was reckoned one of the liberal arts, and was particularly cultivated since the days of St. Gregory, increased the number of his readers. The work of Cassiodorus which chiefly attracted notice, was his Treatise on the *Seven Arts*, coinciding in matter, but surpassing in style and arrangement, the Encyclopædia of Marcianus Capella.

Some scholars of better taste are said, not to have disdained the heathen Macrobius, and other secondary writers; and it is possible, that the best models may have sometimes passed through their hands: but that they derived no real advantage from them, is clearly proved from the character of their various works, which are still preserved.

The subjects which are taught in the schools were, soon after this, comprised under the general heads of *Trivium* and *Quadrivium*, words which are sufficiently indicative of their barbarous origin. *Trivium* included what were deemed the introductory and less noble arts, Grammar, Dialectics, and Rhetoric: *Quadrivium* closed the circle by Music, Arithmetic, Geometry, and Astronomy. The following lines served to fix them in the memory:

BOOK II.

Gramm. loquitur, *Dia.* vera docet, *Rhet.* verba colorat:
Mus. canit, *Ar.* numerat, *Geo.* ponderat, *Ast.* colit astra.

Why the place of honour was rather given to the latter than to the numbers of the *Trivium*, does not distinctly appear; but whatever may have been its temporary ascendant. Logic, or rather the scholastic art of disputation, was afterwards pursued, with so much ardour, that it absorbed all its sister arts, and triumphed over the circle of the *Quadrivium*.

BOOK III.

STATE OF LEARNING FROM THE REIGN OF CHARLEMAGNE, A. D. 774, TO THE END OF THE TENTH CENTURY.

DISPOSITIONS OF CHARLEMAGNE IN REGARD TO LETTERS—FLATTERING PROSPECT AT THE OPENING OF THE NINTH CENTURY.—WHY NO SUCCESS FOLLOWED.—THE LAST YEARS OF CHARLEMAGNE.—ALCUIN, PAUL WARNEFRID, AND EGINHARD.—THE SUCCESSORS OF CHARLEMAGNE.—STATE OF LEARNING IN ROME.—AND IN OTHER PARTS OF THE EMPIRE.—GENERAL LICENTIOUSNESS.—CONVERSION OF BARBAROUS NATIONS.—RABENNS MAURUS.—JOHN ERIGENA.—THE USE OF THEOLOGICAL CONTROVERSIES.—ALFRED.—FLATTERING STATEMENT OF MURATORI.—IRELAND.—THE TENTH CENTURY: A GENERAL VIEW.—THE MONKS NOT ASSIDUOUSLY EMPLOYED.—THE REIGNS OF THE OTHOS.—LITERATURE OF ENGLAND.—ST. DUNSTAN.—GERBERT, AFTERWARDS SYLVESTER II.

BOOK III. Dispositions of Charlemagne in regard to Letters.

ON the fall of the Lombard kingdom, and the accession of Charlemagne to the throne, an æra propitious to learning might be expected to arise. The prince, indeed, was himself ignorant; but he had talents, and a mind susceptible of every liberal impression. The noble monuments of art which Rome and the other cities of Italy presented to his view, and the thoughts which would occasionally recal a period, when science was deemed the ornament of courts, failed not to force a comparison, which tended to excite the

BOOK III.

consciousness of a degrading inferiority. The rude speech of his ancestors was the only language which he possessed at this time, or when almost in his thirtieth year; and it is not certain, that he was able to write. But though the multifarious concerns of an extended and extending empire seemed to demand constant attention and to interrupt all inferior pursuits, we are told that he now began to learn grammar under Peter, a deacon of Pisa, as an introduction, we may presume, to the Latin tongue; and when this was accomplished, Alcuin, an English monk, some years later, became his master. The more noble circle of sciences, was now opened to him; among which astronomy, or rather, let me say, astrology, chiefly fixed his attention. From this time, the court of Charles, whether in France, in Italy, or in Germany, became the central point, to which the learned resorted: they travelled with him; gave public lectures; and where circumstances seemed favourable, founded schools under his patronage*. This opening promised much; and as a strong excitement was given, it was possible that a general ardour might ensue; and the people might emulate the example of the prince. In 800 Charles was crowned Emperor.

Flattering Prospect at the opening of the Ninth Century.

In pursuing another subject, some years ago, and coming to this æra, I expressed my thoughts in the following observations†. "It seemed," I said, "that when the ninth century

* Egenhard, the friend and secretary of Charlemagne, *Vita Caroli Magni*, passim. See Bib. Med. ætat. t. 1.

† *History of the Papal Power.* M. S.

opened, the clouds, which had enveloped the Western world, would be dispersed; that the human faculties, torpid from disuse, or degraded by a vitiating exercise, would recover more energy and assume a more judicious direction; that religion, which vain controversies had disfigured, would cast off its adscititious coverings, and appear, as it once did, in the most attractive simplicity; that a system of ethics, by which the heart of man might be improved, and his understanding invigorated, would take place of legendary tales, of fancied miracles, and imaginary virtues; that the rights of man, in the different orders of society, ecclesiastical and civil, would be more distinctly ascertained; and in one word, that the lamp of science would again burn, and lead to the most glorious and beneficent results.

"The reader, who has long closed every page of this History with a desponding sigh, will naturally ask, what event it is, which now seems to portend so fortunate a change? It is, that Charlemagne, who, through the progress of his reign, had manifested an active zeal for the improvement of the moral condition of the human species, had it now in his power, by the influence of his own example, and the application of all the talents, which his extensive dominions could supply, to advance with a less tardy and more successful pace to the accomplishment of his wishes. He was himself endowed with natural abilities of no ordinary kind; he spoke with cogency and with ease; had acquired the knowledge of some languages, and the rudiments, at least, of those sciences which were then taught. But studies, which had been neglected in his youth, were laborious, desultory, and imperfect. They were promoted by conversation, rather than

BOOK III.

by books; and he seems never to have acquired the easy practice of writing. He was ardent, however, in the pursuit of scientific accomplishments; and the encouragement which he gave to learning, reflects the brightest and least offensive lustre on his name. It was likewise fortunate for the general interests of morality, that he deemed himself, as he was, the political head of the church, and exercised an unlimited jurisdiction over all its members. This is attested by the various edicts which he published under the name of *Capitularies*, for the reform and maintenance of ecclesiastical discipline, the correction of abuses, and the suppression of crimes. At the great festivals, wherever the business of peace or war might require his presence, he met the bishops, abbots, and nobles of the country. From those respectable informants he was made acquainted with the condition of the churches and monasteries, and the manners of the people; and in conjunction with them he concerted measures for the promotion of order and virtue. It was his wish to renew the more rigid discipline of former days; and where that could not be restored, to enforce such measures as were most suitable to the times, and best adapted to repress their manifold disorders.

"With a view to his own improvement, and that of his people, and in order to diffuse a general ardour for literary pursuits, he collected round his court such persons as were most distinguished by abilities and erudition. With these he lived in habits of domestic intimacy, and employed them in educating the princes of the blood, and the children of the nobility. The Anglo-Saxon, Alcuin, whom Charles called his master, was at the head of this society; and with a

laudable ambition, was heard to boast, that, if his own and the wishes of his scholar could be accomplished, a Christian Athens would soon be seen to rise, and the Muses would fix their abode in the academic groves of France. In the prosecution of this noble design, not only encouragement was offered, but commands were issued. The bishops erected schools contiguous to their churches; whilst the monks established them in their monasteries. Nor did the imperial court, as it moved, fail to set the example in profane and theological researches, whilst it watched and rewarded the progress of science in all the seminaries of the empire *.

" It was another fortunate circumstance, that this empire was so widely extended. It comprised what afterwards became the monarchy of France; in Spain, the four provinces which extend from the Pyrenees to the river Ebro; in Italy, the late kingdom of the Lombards, from the Alps to the borders of Calabria; in Germany, many regions from the Rhine to the Elbe; and to the south, it stretched into Pannonia or the modern Hungary, and the provinces immediately bordering on the confines of Greece. Two-thirds of the former western empire of Rome were subject to Charlemagne; and it has been observed that the deficiency was amply supplied by his command of the almost inaccessible and martial nations of Germany, whom he had compelled to submit to his sceptre and to embrace the profession of christianity. Among the latter he established episcopal sees, where cities

* Egenhard ut sup. Alcuin, Epp. pass.

BOOK III.

were founded; and schools were established in order to imbue the minds of the barbarous inhabitants with the precepts of religion and humanity. And in all parts of the empire, he had reason to expect an active co-operation in his beneficent schemes from the means which he had devised, and the spirit which he had infused. Some remains of learning were preserved in Rome; and in certain cities of Italy: and a hope was naturally cherished that the tree of science would again flourish in a soil so congenial with its growth. And would not the Roman bishop, the first minister of religion, ardently embrace a scheme, in which the best interests of that religion were involved, and aspire to become, with his royal master, the restorer of learning, and the patron of the learned? His example would diffuse the emulation of literature and of science amongst the prelates of the church.

"Such was the state of things, and such for a moment the glowing perspective of what was about to be; but the faint beams of a wintery sun are not of sufficient intensity or continuance to dispel the mist, to warm the air, and give new life to the torpid fibres of the vegetable world.

Why no Success followed.

"The want of success in the strenuous efforts and excellent establishments of Charlemagne, may be traced to various causes:—To the inaptitude of the teachers, who, though endowed with the natural powers of intellect, knew not how to excite attention, to interest curiosity, or to rouse into action the latent capacities of the mind. To the subjects called sciences, or the seven liberal arts—grammar, rhetoric, logic, arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy—which were so taught, as to disgust by their barbarous elements;

and of which the emaciated and haggard skeleton was alike unfit for ornament or for use.—To the absence of the first rudiments of education, as of reading and writing, in the higher orders of society; and to their habitual devotion to martial exercises; and amusements which kept up the image of war, and enured them to its dangers and its toils.—These, it was not likely that they would be allured to relinquish by the insipid lectures of the schools—to the oblivion in which the classical productions of former ages were buried, or the disregard in which they were held—to a want of capacity in the bishops, clergy and monks, upon whom the weighty charge of education had devolved—to a selfish reflection in the same order of men, that in proportion to the decline of learning and the spread of ignorance, their churches and monasteries had prospered; whilst the revival of letters was likely to divert the copious streams of pious benevolence into a channel less favourable to the interests of the clergy and the monks.—To a marked aversion in the bishop of Rome to any scheme, by which the minds of churchmen, or of others might be turned to the study of antiquity, and to those documents, which would disclose on what futile reasons and sandy foundations the exclusive prerogatives of his see were established.—To the genius of the christian system itself, which was now fortified by long indurated habits and maxims, which, when it expelled the Pagan deities from their seats, too successfully fixed a reproach on many things connected with them; and thus contributed to banish from the schools, and to consign to oblivion, those works, on the study and the prevalence of which will ever depend the progress of the arts, of the sciences, and of literary taste.

BOOK III.

"To these causes—and others, local, temporary, or personal, which might be enumerated—must be ascribed that failure which the great scheme of Charlemagne experienced. Hence no effect followed adequate to his wishes; to the treasures which he expended; to the encouragement which he afforded; or to the brilliant expectations, which the sanguine entertained. The clergy continued to be oppressed by the same supine indifference; the same intellectual drowsiness was seen in the monks, whilst the people adhered with the same fondness or clung with the same obstinacy to their habits of credulity and superstition. But still sparks of curiosity were excited, which must have been productive of some intellectual improvement: and it is but just to own that, though the sages of Charlemagne drew little advantage from them, his efforts were instrumental in providing repositories for the sacred and profane treasures of antiquity; where they were in some measure secured from the further ravages of time, and whence light might finally be derived by some future generation."

Such was the view which, some years ago, presented itself to my inquiries; and I see no reason to alter the opinion which I was then induced to form.

The last Years of Charlemagne.

After his inauguration, Charlemagne having spent the months of winter in Rome, returned to his favourite residence of Aix-la-Chapelle, where, as well as in other places of his dominions, he incessantly laboured, by circular letters, by synods, and by admonitions, to reform the accumulated abuses in church and state. A contemporary

writer* thus describes his laudable exertions: "Never," says he, "did he cease from exhorting the bishops to the study of the scriptures, the clergy to the observance of discipline, the monks to regularity, the nobles to edify by good example, the magistrates to justice, the warriors to arms, those in office to humility, inferiors to obedience, in one word, all to virtue and to concord." Probably, from the general barbarism of the times, and the absence of real attainments in himself, he might not be sensible of the little progress which his endeavours made, or might be flattered by some apparent and transient change. However this may be, he persevered with undiminished ardour; and, in the last year of his life, he directed five synods to be held in the principal cities of his Gaulish dominions. The canons, which were ordained in these meetings, are still extant. At this time, only Louis remained of his three sons, to whom Charlemagne bequeathed his kingdoms, with the title of Emperor; and having exhorted him "to honour the bishops as his parents, and to love the people as his children," he died in the beginning of the year 814, leaving behind him a name so greatly respected, that—though his own plans, as I have observed, were not crowned with success—his example long retained a powerful influence. In after times it was deemed motive enough, to sanction any undertaking, in which the promotion of letters might be concerned—that Charlemagne had attempted it, or that the measure had formed some part of his scheme.

* Theod. episc. Aurelian. in Præf. ad capit.

BOOK III.

Alcuin, Paul Warnefrid, and Eginhard.

Some years before the death of his master, Alcuin had obtained permission to retire to his monastery of St. Martin in the city of Tours. In early life he had been the pupil of Egbert, Archbishop of York; who was himself a prelate of learning, and the patron of the learned; whilst, by opening to the perusal of his scholars a library, which he had collected, he stimulated curiosity, and supplied the means of improvement*. That the talents of Alcuin were great, will not be disputed; nor will it be disputed, that his acquirements were considerable, when compared with the literary attainments of the age. It has been objected against him, that, from his own propensities, and from the bias which he gave to the mind of Charlemagne, ecclesiastical studies were alone encouraged; which caused those of literature to be neglected, without any thing being done to bring back a just taste, and to promote the cultivation of the modern languages. The long list of his works† comprises chiefly treatises on religion, and other associated points. But nothing, in the circle of human knowledge, seems to have escaped him; and when he writes on the subjects of grammar and rhetoric; when he lays down rules of dialectic; when he discourses on moral duties; or when, relaxing his mind from higher pursuits, he deigns to be a poet, that is, to make verses—we may presume, that some of his admirers would be induced to turn to those better sources, from which Alcuin

* Wil. Malmesb. de Gest. Pont. Ang. l. III.

† Cave Hist. Lit.

had derived instruction; and to the perusal of which, we cannot doubt, that he often invited his followers. In the cultivation of modern languages, rude and imperfect as those languages then were, we cannot be surprised, that he and other scholars should have been remiss. Latin was spoken among all the pretenders to science, and without it, neither the Saxon Alcuin, nor the learned strangers who crowded round the court of Charlemagne, could have contributed any effectual aid to his schemes of improvement. It is, however, related of the prince himself, who must have conversed principally in Latin, that he directed a collection to be made of the songs of the ancient bards or German poets, both to inspire a love of composition, and to perpetuate their memories.

On the subject of ecclesiastical studies I wish to add, that, if they were so much encouraged, as I have stated, it does not therefore follow, that literature was utterly neglected, and nothing done to revive a just taste. The clergy and the monks were the only teachers; because they only had learned. It was, therefore, in the first place, necessary to give a due direction to their minds; to excite the ardour of application; to place before them the best models of former days, in the works of the Jeroms, the Augustins, the Leos, and the Gregories: as religion would thus be viewed in its best light; the abuses, which ignorance had introduced, be corrected; and the intellectual capacity be improved. This point once gained, what remained to be effected, in the departments of literature and taste, would have followed, in due time, as an easy consequence. I think, therefore, that the plan of improvement was wisely conceived.

BOOK III.

I am however, willing to allow, that the merit of Alcuin consisted chiefly in the advice which he gave to his master; in the ardour with which he espoused his views; in the various means which he devised, in schools and seminaries, for the promotion of learning; and in the lectures, which he often delivered, as incitements to application. Extravagance in the praises of his contemporaries may be pardoned; but in more modern writers, if they had read his works, such praises are void of meaning. "His erudition," they sometimes say *, "was singularly great, his speech elegant, his style concise, simple, pure: in prose and verse he was equally polished: to the knowledge of Latin he joined that of the Greek and Hebrew languages; and he was a complete master in all mathematical, philosophical, and theological sciences."

In the decline of life, when he retired to Tours, where he enjoyed an interval of literary ease, he thus detailed his occupations in a letter addressed to Charlemagne †, who had earnestly pressed him to return to his court: "As you advised me, and as my own inclinations lead, I am sedulously employed, within these walls, in imparting to some, instruction from the pot of the holy scriptures; while I labour to inebriate others with the old wine of the ancient schools; feed others with the apples of grammatical subtilty; and illumine others with the arrangement of the stars, placed as in the painted ceiling of some great edifice. This I do, that, by the

* Pits de Illust. Ang. Scrip.

† Gul. Malm. ut ante.

acquirements of learning, the church may prosper, and honour be done to your imperial reign; as also that the grace of heaven may not be void in me, nor the effects of your beneficence be lost." He laments, however, the want of books; mentions the stores which he enjoyed in his own country, by the liberal industry of Archbishop Egbert; and purposes, if agreeable to his majesty, to send some of his pupils, who may furnish themselves with the most necessary copies, "and thus transplant into France the flowers of Britain." Alcuin died in the year 804, leaving behind him many learned men who had been tutored in his school, and many works on a variety of subjects*. His pupils, by their efforts, preserved, though only in a slow and rippling current, the continuity of science; and his works, though no longer read, would prove, if they were perused, the ardour of his zeal to revive the love of letters, which had been extinguished by the gross barbarism of the times.

Among the other sages who were patronised by Charlemagne, and connected in friendship and in letters with Alcuin, were Paulinus, patriarch of Aquileia, celebrated for his virtues and his learning; Theodolphus, bishop of Orleans, a poet, as well as a writer on moral subjects; two metropolitans of Milan, Peter and Odelbertus; and, to abridge a list, that might be crowded with many names, the historian, Paul Warnefrid, otherwise called Paul the deacon, and the biographer Eginhard.

---

* See Cave Hist. Letter. Dupin. Bib. Eccles. Bib. Lat. med. ætat.

BOOK III. P. Paul was educated in the court, and held important offices under the last of the Lombard kings, after whose fall he joined the learned society in the suite of Charlemagne, whose confidence he enjoyed; and afterwards retired to Monte-Casino. If we could give credit to the extravagant encomiums which have been lavished on this favoured monk, neither Athens nor Rome, in their best days could produce any thing more excellent.

Græcâ cerneris Homerus,
Latinâ Virgilius,
In Hebræa quoque Philo,
Tertullus in artibus;
Flaccus crederis in metris,
Tibullus eloquio.

The lines were addressed to him in the name of Charlemagne. But we have the poet's answer, as well as other specimens of his talents, from which a more accurate judgment may be formed. His History of the *Lombard Nation* is what, I believe, has alone rescued his name from oblivion; and this, whatever may be its defects in early authenticity, or in style, merits our commendation. It is such a history as could alone have been expected in the times in which it appeared, and it contains many important documents, for which we might elsewhere search in vain*.

The *Life of Charlemagne*, by Eginhard, his friend and

* See Rer. Ital. Script. t. i. p. 1. Storia della Lett. Ital. t. iii. Bib. Lat. med. ætat.

confidential secretary, is not destitute of elegance; but it is chiefly valuable, as a record of facts, of many of which he was an eye-witness, and it exhibits rather a partial delineation of the character of his master. Eginhard survived Charlemagne many years, and continued to serve his children, as far as the cares of the monastic life, to which, agreeably to the taste of the age, he had devoted himself, would permit*. He is also the author of *Annals (rerum Francorum)*, which has acquired for him, in character and in priority of time, the first place in the list of German historians†.

The Successors of Charlemagne.

The six successors of the royal blood of Charlemagne, who, during the greater part of the ninth century, filled the imperial throne, did but little to carry into effect the wise measures which their great ancestor had projected. Indeed, it was soon manifest, that however wise, as has been observed, those measures might have been, the grossness of barbarism was at that time too dense to be dispersed. Even in Italy, where much had been attempted, and where, from a variety of peculiar circumstances, it could not be, that the love of letters, particularly in the ecclesiastical order, should be wholly extinct—no permanent good had been produced.

In 823, Lotharius, the grandson of Charles, published an edict for the erection of schools, in the preface to which he

* Bib. Lat. med. ætat.

† Meusel's Leitfaden, p. 580.

BOOK III. says: "In regard to learning, which, by the negligence and ignorance of certain rulers, has been in all places completely lost, it has seemed good, that what we have ordained be every-where observed. Let the masters, appointed by us to teach, take care that their scholars attend to their instruction, and make that proficiency which the times demand. With this view, and in order that neither distance of place nor distress of circumstances be an excuse to any, we have fixed on such cities as will be found most generally convenient*." He then names the cities, which are nine, and, at the same time, specifies the subordinate towns in the vicinage, the youth of which are to repair to the above schools. At the head of them is Pavia. But this provision regards only Lombardy, or what was then called the kingdom of Italy, which had been lately conquered by Charlemagne.

The papal states, with regard, at least, to their internal regulations, were independent of the kingdom of Italy, so were the Venetian provinces, and the duchy of Benevento, which latter then comprised a great portion of the kingdom of Naples, and remained subject to princes of the Lombard family. Nor had the Greeks as yet wholly quitted Italy. Naples, and Gaeta, and much of Calabria, either submitted to the Byzantine throne, or paid a certain tribute as an acknowledgment of its sovereignty, whilst the Saracens, who were now masters of Sardinia, and soon added Sicily to their

* Ap. Scrip. Rer. Ital. t. I. p. 2.

conquests, often landed on the Italian coast, pillaging its cities, and carrying their inhabitants into slavery.

What the active exertions of Charlemagne could not effect, could not well be expected from the edicts of his successors. The law of Lotharius provided schools, and, if salaries were appointed by him, masters also would be found; but talents and taste would still be wanting, and the call of the prince, when addressed to the listlessness of indolence, would be heeded by few. Indeed, all the annals of the times prove, that nothing was done; unless it may be thought something, that about the same time, under Eugenius II. a Roman council was induced to turn its attention to the same subject. Having observed that, in many places, there were no masters, and that all studies were neglected, the fathers assembled decree*: "Therefore, let care be taken, that, wherever a necessity shall appear, teachers be appointed, who shall assiduously give instructions on the study of letters and the liberal arts, as also on the holy doctrines of religion."

State of Learning in Rome.

Was this decree more successful? When we look to Rome and her bishops, without admitting, in all their latitude, the statements of the papal biographer †, it will be readily acknowledged, that superior acquirements generally graced the successors of St. Peter. But the knowledge which they

* Baron. Annal. Eccles. ad. an. 826.

† Anast. Bibliothec. Vitæ. Rom. Pontif. inter Scrip. Rer. Ital. t. III. p. 1.

BOOK III. possessed was chiefly ecclesiastical; and the wide sphere of administration which now more than ever occupied their attention, allowed but little leisure for pursuits which were comparatively of less attractive interest. And that the same barbarism, which was visible in all the writings of the age, had equally infected the first ministers of religion, is manifested in the numerous epistolary specimens which have come down to us*. Eugenius II. indeed, as we have just seen, aware of the low ebb to which learning was reduced, joined his synod in an attempt to revive some attention to letters; but it was of no avail; whilst we know, what use was made of the general ignorance, in order to give currency and validity to the supposed authenticity of certain documents, by which the prerogative of the Roman See was to be extended; but which the penetration of a just criticism has long since pronounced to be spurious. The design of these fictitious compositions was, to shew, that all the power which was in that period assumed by the Pontiffs, was founded on the acts of ancient councils, and the dogmatical epistles of their early predecessors; and if any proof of the grossest ignorance, or of the most fixed apathy were wanting, it might be hence adduced, that such palpable fictions were generally received without being examined, or, if examined, that the fraud remain undetected.

And in other Parts of the Empire. While Italy, and what is more, while Rome, in the presence of her exquisite monuments of taste, was sinking daily deeper

* See Conc. Gen. passim.

and deeper into the gulph of barbarism—it could not be expected, that a brighter prospect would elsewhere be disclosed. Yet in all the regions subject to the new imperial controul, the successors of Charles pursued the steps of their great progenitor. In France and in Germany, we read of schools which were either erected by their munificence, or renovated by their zeal; of the masters whom they procured; and of the bishops and many abbots who cheerfully co-operated* in the good work. Yet I feel not here the same disappointment. Barbarians, it is true, had overrun and conquered those provinces of the same stock as that which had overrun and conquered Italy with its capital; but literature and the arts, had at no time, flourished among them as in the better soil of Italy. In this more favoured region innumerable monuments remained which necessarily kept alive the recollection of former days; the language of Cicero, of Livius, of Virgil, embalmed in their respective works, was still understood and spoken; and in the veins of many, the same blood, though somewhat contaminated, continued to flow †. If these incitements to regeneration, powerful in themselves, and powerfully aided by the zeal of Charlemagne, were without effect; can we be surprised that, in the less favourable circumstances of other countries, the reign of barbarism was irresistibly triumphant? Some repetition must be pardoned.

General Licentiousness.

Perhaps, I have not sufficiently dwelt on the licentious

* See Brucker, Hist. Phil. t. III.

† See on the state of literature in Italy, the 43d Dissertation of Muratori Antiq. Ital. Medii Ævi. t. VIII.

BOOK III.

manners of the times, which, infecting all orders in the church and state, produced a general distaste for serious occupations, and made letters an object of contempt. On this subject, the complaints of the most candid and impartial writers are unanimous and loud. The bishops, often passed their lives in the splendour of courts, and the bosom of luxurious indolence; the inferior clergy, in proportion, as their circumstances would admit, copied the behaviour of their superiors; and we need not detail what under this corrupt influence, were the manners of the people. The riches which flowed in such copious streams into the church were, in part, the cause of these evils; while the higher clergy, in consequenee of the possessions which they held by feudal tenure, were bound to perform certain services; and even, at times, to take the field at the head of their retainers. Thus acting in a sphere, which was not at all consistent with their ecclesiastical duties, they soon began to regard them with contempt; and their minds became completely secularized. We hear of many churchmen whose ignorance was extreme. Could they read, with a certain fluency, a passage in the Latin Bible, it was thought that they might be useful to the people: to understand the same passage argued a superior mind. Yet in this order alone was concentrated all the learning, small as it was, which the age could boast. To correct its depravity, and if possible to divert the minds of men to better pursuits, the Emperors issued edicts; synods promulgated decrees; and good men raised their voices in admonitions and remonstrances. But the torrent of ignorance was too impetuous to be repressed.

Conversion of Barbarous Nations.

As the spirit of Christianity, wherever its influence is felt, has a direct tendency to soften the ferocity of the human

character, and by fostering the kindly habits of social life, to prepare it for the admission of intellectual improvements, we are gratified, in reading the annals of these times, to discover, that many nations, particularly in the north of Europe, were reclaimed from the errors of heathenism. For notwithstanding the evidence of general ignorance—which the preceding pages have established—and in which the principal realms of the west, confessedly christian, were sunk, it must still be owned, that their conversion was, at least, one step towards a state of higher civilization. In the last century, many tribes of Germans had been converted by our countryman Winfrid, better known by the name of Boniface; and some years later, Charlemagne had compelled the Saxons—who peopled a large portion of the German territory—with the sword at their throats, to enter the christian pale. But in order to assist in mitigating their ferocity; in reconciling them to their new faith and inducing them to submit gradually to his government—he appointed ecclesiastical ministers to reside amongst them—and he erected schools, and founded monasteries, that the means of instruction might be every-where diffused. It is related that he had recourse to the same precautions amongst the Huns of Pannonia, who were a still more fierce and untractable race, whom he had also converted to the faith, when, exhausted and depressed by a series of defeats, they were no longer able to make head against his victorious arms, and chose rather to be christians than to be slaves.

In the present century, the gospel continued to be propagated under the successors of Charles. The Swedes, Danes, and Cimbrians, received the faith; while, more to the north-east of Europe, the Bulgarians, Sclavonians, and Russians,

BOOK III. were visited by preachers of the Greek church. They listened to their instructions, and admitted the common faith; but with it the discipline and jurisdiction of Byzantium *.

Some compensation was thus made to the Christian church for its losses by the overwhelming success of the Arabian arms; and as christianity should be more extensively diffused, the northern converts would be softened by its mild influence, and prepared for the further improvements of civilized life. It is an observation, founded on the evidence of facts, that, in the revolutions of modern Europe, the progress of barbarism and conquest has been from the north; whilst the southern nations, which have been overrun, have in return presented to them civilization for rudeness, and arts for arms.

Rabanus Maurus.

In the dreary gloom of general apathy and ignorance, in which we are enveloped, I must not omit to mention the name of Rabanus Maurus, a native of Germany, and a monk of the abbey of Fulda, whose celebrity was, in a great measure, owing to the instructions of Alcuin. From him, it is said, that he received the name of Maurus (a name of dignity in the Benedictine order) as it was his usual practice, when he had a scholar, whose talents he admired, and whose emulation he wished to inflame, to signalize him by the appellation of some ancient worthy, who was distinguished by his literary acquirements, or his moral qualities. He gave to Angelbert, who sometimes wrote verses which pleased him, the title of

* See Mosheim, Fleury, and the authors quoted by them.

Homer, and to Charlemagne that of David. Rabanus was the chief teacher in his monastery, where he united the lessons of profane science to the study of the scriptures; and his school became so celebrated, that the superiors of convents, in distant provinces, sent their pupils to be initiated in its discipline; and the children of the nobility were seen crowding to Fulda. "As the age of his pupils permitted, or their abilities seemed to require, he instructed some in the rules of grammar, others in those of rhetoric; whilst he conducted the more advanced into the deeper researches of human and divine philosophy, freely communicating whatever they wished to learn. At the same time, they were expected to commit to writing, in prose or verse, the occurrences of the day*," or rather, probably the substance of his lectures. Thus laudably treading in the steps of Alcuin, Rabanus perpetuated his master's fame; and the seminary of Fulda, as we are told, produced the majority of those, who, in the ninth century, in Germany and Gaul, reflected any light on the literature of the age. Rabanus was afterwards raised to the see of Mentz, which he adorned by his virtues, as he had Fulda by his learning; and where he died about the year 856, with the general opinion, "that Italy had not seen his like, nor Germany produced his equal†."

The other principal schools were those of the two Corbeys, in Gaul and Germany, and of Rheims and Liege.

---

* Trithemius, Annal. Hirsaug. t. 1. ap. Brucker, t. III.

† Ibid. See also Cave Hist. Litter. Bib. Lat. med. ætat.

BOOK III.

John Erigena.

The social intercourse and scientific communication which had subsisted between Charlemagne and Alcuin, were renewed between his grandson Charles the Bald, king of France, and afterwards Emperor, and our countryman John Erigena; by some deemed a native of Wales, by others of Scotland, and by others, perhaps with more probability, of Erin or Ireland. However this may be, the fame of his talents and learning having reached the ears of Charles, he was invited by him to his court, where his wit and endowments procured him the esteem of his master; and the superintendence of the schools*. He is said to have possessed the Greek, Hebrew, and Arabic languages; and some accounts, which are not entitled to much credit, are given of his travels into distant countries. I think it more probable that he was indebted to his own genius and exertions, rather than to the schools, as is pretended, of Alexandria and Athens; and if we could calculate the sum of his acquirements, we should find their magnitude to have arisen from the comparative ignorance of his contemporaries. Acute in intellect, and subtle in disputation, he engaged in the Predestinarian controversy against Gotteschalc, and afterwards translated from the Greek, at the solicitation of the king, the mystical works of the Pseudo Dionysius, at that time deemed the genuine productions of the Athenian Areopagite. It has been a subject of regret that doctrines were by this means, introduced into the western church, which tended to bewilder the mind in a labyrinth of difficulties, and to perplex the simplicity of the christian faith. The labours of Erigena, though

* Guil. Malm. de Gest. Reg. Ang. l. II.

applauded by his admirers, did not even then escape censure. The chaotic obscurities of the Alexandrian school were rendered still more impenetrable by the obscurities of this translation; but it was this circumstance which rendered them an object of devout attention and disputatious interest. The pride of superficial ignorance appeared to be gratified by mysterious speculations, which passed under the name of oriental philosophy, which had been generated in Asia, adopted by Plato, nourished in Egypt, and endeared to the schools of Greece; and so captivated was Erigena, that, having completed his translation, he sat down to an original work. This he entitled, *On the Nature of Things*, which nature he divides into that "which creates, and is not created; that which is created, and creates; that which is created, and doth create; and that which neither creates, nor is created." Under these heads he comprises all things, mixing sacred with profane, and heaping paradox on paradox, from which, however, this general doctrine is deduced—that, as all things originally were contained in God, and proceeded from him into the different classes, by which they are now distinguished, so shall they finally return to him, and be resolved into the source from which they came; in other words, that, as before the world was created, there was no being but God, and the causes of all things were in him; so, after the end of the world, there will be no being but God, and the causes of all things in him. This final resolution he elsewhere denominates *deification*, or in the Greek language, which he affected to use, θεωσις.

Nothing like this had before been presented to the ears of western scholars; and, as it was pretended to be derived

BOOK III.

from the deep recesses of the most ancient schools, we cannot be surprised, that it was received by many with awful admiration. That it should have gained the attention of Charles and his Gaulish courtiers, is a fact not void of interest to those who are fond of scrutinizing the anomalous propensities of the human mind. The doctrine itself, indeed, was taken, as I observed, from the Platonists, and chiefly from the works which Erigena had translated*. He wrote another Treatise on the Body and Blood of Christ, which, though now lost, excited much controversy in a later age.

The learning of Erigena, however extolled, escaped not the animadversion of Rome, to which he was cited; but the Bibliothecarian Anastasius thus expressed himself†, in an address to his patron Charles: "I am astonished, that a barbarian, placed at the extremity of the world, as remote from the conversation of men as from all knowledge, it should seem, of a foreign tongue, should have been able to understand, and to translate, the works of a Greek father. I allude to John, that Scottish man, who, as I also hear, is famed for piety. If so, it must be the work of the divine spirit, which first inflamed his mind with the love of virtue, and then bestowed on him the gift of tongues." Anastasius, who, as we know from his life, was versed in Greek, had probably experienced more than common difficulty in the acquirement; but his ignorance

* See Dupin Bib. Eccles. siec. 9, and particularly the learned Brucker, t. III. also Bib. Lat. med. ætat.

† See Cave Hist. Lit.

was gross, if he did not know, that, at that extremity of the world, which he pretends to ridicule, there were, at this period, schools not less renowned than those of Italy; and a moment's recollection would have told him, that, in the preceding century, the Saxon Bede had been invited, in order to afford his intellectual aid in the exigencies of the Roman See; and that, a few years later, the prerogative of that See was supported, and its claims extended, by the zeal and learning of the Saxon Wilfrid *.

Whatever might be the censures to which the wild theories of Erigena justly exposed their author, he forfeited not the friendship of Charles; but after his death in 877, we are told that he returned to England, where he experienced a treatment equally flattering, from a protector who was no less kind and able.

The Use of Theological Controversies.

Before I mention who this protector was, I wish to observe, that the various controversies in which many members of the Latin church were engaged during the course of this century, though they disturbed its internal peace, were not void of some good effects, as they roused the mind into action, and exercised its powers. The controversies on predestination, grace, and free-will, provoked the utmost subtlety of discussion; nor was less activity of mind produced by the various and animated disputes, which occupied the life of

* Anastasius, who lived at this time, is the author, or compiler, of the *Historia de vitis Rom. Pontif.* called also *Liber Pontificalis.*

BOOK III.

Hincmar—the celebrated archbishop of Rheims, and the first ecclesiastical scholar of the age—sometimes with the members of his own church, and often with the Roman court, the encroachments of which he strenuously opposed. A similar effect was observable in the litigation on the subject of the Eucharist, provoked by the Treatise of Paschasius Radbertus, and the contest with Photius, the Byzantine patriarch, in which it was necessary, in defending the doctrine and discipline of the Latins, to recur to ancient tradition, and to meet the bold assertions of an experienced adversary *. Those individuals, whom the pride of singularity, the love of truth, the eagerness of disputation, or the hope of triumph, engaged in these controversies, evinced no small vigour of thought or acuteness of perception, with a knowledge of the subject, which was sufficiently comprehensive; but they were deficient in critical taste and discrimination, without which the most learned disquisitions, though they may sometimes convince, can never please. The works even of Hincmar, though of infinite value to the ecclesiastical antiquary, betray all the defects of a gross age; and a comparison of those works, in style, in diction, and arrangement, with the writings of his contemporary, the Constantinopolitan Photius, would shew, at one view, the distinct characters of their respective schools, and the decided inferiority of those of the Western Church. In Photius we have a polite scholar, whose taste, which was formed on the best models of antiquity, is perceptible in every subject that engages his pen;

* See on those Controversies the Ecclesiastical Writers.

while Hincmar, equal in natural powers, but chastened by no discipline, and only rich, though immensely rich, in the treasures of ecclesiastical research, like a heavy-armed warrior, oppresses by his weight; but displays no art, no agility, no elegance. The first may still interest the learned leisure of the scholar; and the laborious theologian may consult the other, when he is desirous of tracing the controversies of the ninth century, and the stages of its discipline.

Alfred.

The immortal Alfred became the friend and patron of John Erigena, on his return to Britain. Alfred had been seated on the throne since the year 871; but, owing to the troubles caused by the Danish invaders, he was soon afterwards reduced to extreme distress; and some years passed before his power was firmly established, and he had leisure to turn his thoughts to the domestic concerns of the state. His early education had been neglected; but he had twice visited Rome, the view of whose majestic monuments had probably contributed to expand the sentiments of a mind, which was naturally elevated. After his return, we soon find him engaged in the recital of Saxon poems, and thence proceeding to the study of the Latin tongue.

When this great king had restored public tranquillity, and formed such institutions, civil and military—as were judged most proper to promote security, to encourage industry, and to prevent the recurrence of those calamities, which had so long desolated the country—we accompany him with pleasure in the occupations of a legislator, and in the measures which he adopted with no less wisdom, for the revival of letters. On his accession, as the historians relate, he found the

BOOK III. English people sunk into the grossest ignorance. The monasteries, which were then the only seats of learning, were destroyed, the monks dispersed, their libraries burnt; and he was heard to lament, that, south of the Thames, he knew not one person who could interpret the Latin service; and very few, in the north, who had this degree of literary proficiency.

Having provided the situations which seemed most convenient, in the towns and in the neighbourhood of the repaired monasteries, he collected such men of learning as were dispersed within the realm; and, by the allurement of high salaries, he attracted scholars from abroad. At this period he was joined by John Erigena. But though the means of instruction were ready, no general inclination was manifested; and we therefore read of a law, by which all freeholders, possessed of two hides of land or more, were enjoined to send their children to school; and, in order to supply a still more powerful inducement, he promised preferment, whether in church or state, to such only as should have made some proficiency in learning.

Among the various schools, which were established by Alfred, that of Oxford is said to have been founded, or, at least, to have been renovated by him; and he endowed it with many privileges, immunities, and revenues. The example of the prince, as it ever happens, was soon followed by the nobility. They also erected schools; and as Alfred was seen to delight in the society of learned men, the same society became the fashionable appendage of persons in the highest rank. By these and similar expedients, a happy

change became gradually more apparent; and Alfred had reason to congratulate himself on the improvement which he had produced in the habits of his people.

The assiduity with which this incomparable prince, in the midst of his public avocations, pursued his literary labours, is almost incredible. His time was divided into three equal portions; and of these a third was given to study and devotion. While men of secondary talents were employed by him in making English versions of such authors, as were likely to prove most useful, he himself, in original compositions, or in translations, laboured to add to the stock of national improvement, and to stimulate the desire of intellectual cultivation. Instead of general precepts, Alfred endeavoured to enliven his moral lessons by apologues or fables; some of which were taken from former Saxon compositions, and others the fruit of his own invention, "written with elegance and a playful amenity." He is even said to have translated the Fables of Æsop from the Greek: but we may place more reliance on the report, that he was the author of the Saxon translations of the *Histories* of Orosius and Bede, and of Boetius on the *Consolation of Philosophy*.

It cannot be proved, nor would it be material to discuss, whether these and other works, though ascribed to the royal scholar, were not rather the productions of the Cambrian Asserius—who has written the *History* of his reign—or of John Erigena—who was appointed to regulate the studies at Oxford—or of some other of the many learned natives, who were patronized by his liberality. The talents of the monarch were more than adequate to the labour to which his name

BOOK III. is affixed; and we know that he encouraged the people by his example, in all pursuits which were calculated to improve their manners, and to forward the best interests of society. On all sides, a spirit of industry prevailed; and, under the hands of able workmen, new edifices were seen to rise, while the ruined cities, castles, palaces, and monasteries were rebuilt and beautified.

Contemporaries, foreigners and natives, repeating the long catalogue of his moral virtues and mental endowments, regarded Alfred as the greatest prince, who, after Charlemagne, had appeared in Europe; and posterity has ratified the encomiums which they pronounced. If then, whilst Charlemagne was on the throne, the century opened with that prospect which I described, as so auspicious to Europe; it closed, within a narrower orbit, no less prosperously to the inhabitants of Britain. Alfred died in the year 901*.

Flattering Statement of Muratori.

In turning over the valuable pages of the learned Muratori, I was somewhat surprised to read—in a *Dissertation* † on the State of Literature in Italy at this period—the high commendation which he bestows on the schools of our island; when it is known, how low their condition was before the days of Alfred. He is speaking of Dungal, a native, as was sup-

* See, on the life of Alfred, the old English historians, particularly Asserius Menevensis, *De rebus Gestis Alfred.*—Also Leland *De Scrip. Brit.* who is very copious.

† Antiq. Ital. Med. ævi Dissert. 43.

posed of Scotland, who was chosen by the Emperor Lotharius to preside over the studies at Pavia. The incident, he thinks, shews, how great the dearth of masters was, among his own countrymen; and he asks, why recourse was not rather had to Gaul, than to so remote a country? "I have already shewn," he replies, "that Gaul herself was in want of foreign aid. Nor should praise be withheld from Britain, Scotland, and Ireland, which, at this time, in the career of letters, surpassed the other realms of the West; and that chiefly by the labour of the monks, who, while learning elsewhere lay languid and depressed, vigorously encouraged and upheld its cause. That in Gaul the pursuits of science were revived, and schools opened, was owing to the Saxon Alcuin; and Italy confessed her obligations to him and to his countrymen."

The passage is flattering, and, may not be untrue as far as it applies to the few individuals whom he names; but his general statement of the flourishing condition of our learning cannot be admitted. South of the Thames, observed Alfred, I knew not one person who could interpret the Latin service, and very few, in the north, who had this degree of proficiency.

Having expressed his high obligations to our countrymen, the learned Italian proceeds to specify a signal favour, bestowed by the Pavian professor Dungal, which might have helped to instil a better taste for letters, and gradually to diffuse that taste through the other cities of Italy. This favour was a present of many volumes to the convent of Bobbio, in the neighbourhood of Piacenza. Early in the

BOOK III. seventh century, this convent had been founded by the Irish monk Columban; and it is probable that Dungal himself became a monk in this society; or a natural attachment to its founder prompted the benefaction. In the list given of the books of Dungal and of many others, which formed the library, are many volumes, both sacred and profane; but few of the works are entire. There were four books of Virgil; two of Ovid; one of Lucretius; with a broken series of the fathers and other writers. The monks appear to have copied as their fancy directed; or their diligence was more or less persevering. And we have often reason to lament, that their selection was not guided by a better taste. Perhaps, however, the scarcity, or rather the dearness, of the materials—before linen paper was invented—might be the occasion, why the labour of the transcribers was often suspended, and works left imperfect, even when the copies in their hands were entire*.

Ireland. But should the state of Ireland be really assimilated to that of other countries, when we are told by Bede and other ancient writers, how much it was celebrated after the death of St. Patric in the fifth century, for the sanctity of his disciples, and the general learning of the monks? It is added that our own island, and also Europe, received instructions from that quarter, to which there was a general resort of scholars as to the emporium of science. In the beginning of the ninth century, it is related that no fewer than seven

* See the Dissertation before quoted.

thousand students frequented the schools of Armagh; while there were three more rival colleges in other cities, with many private seminaries in the remoter provinces.

I do not know how much or how little truth may be in these statements; for so much fiction is crowded into all the accounts of Ireland—whether we consider the supposed origin of its inhabitants; the dynasties of its princes; the policy of its governments; the antiquity of its records; and its literary renown—that he must be a sturdy believer, whose scepticism is not awakened in every period of its history. I admit, however, that fiction has often some truth for its basis; and I am not disposed to controvert the positive declarations of the Venerable Bede—that before, and about his time, the Irish church possessed many eminent men; that it had libraries; and that, from its schools, learning was often imported into other countries. Of what description this learning was, these other countries sufficiently attest: but it is sufficient praise for Ireland, that she sent out teachers, by whose industry the cause of general knowledge, such as it was, was promoted; nor is it any proper topic of reproach, that she did not impart to others what, from the unfavourable circumstances of the times, she herself was not permitted to acquire. And how admirable soever might be the productions of her own native bards and other writers, it was in Latin only that instruction could be communicated to the pupils of other regions*.

* See Bede passim, also *The Irish Historical Library*, by Nicolson, which contains much interesting matter.

BOOK III.

The Tenth Century.

A General View.

From the pleasing contemplation of the reign of Alfred, when on the commencement of a new century we turn our attention to the continent, to Italy, to France, to Spain, or to Germany, we find them involved in darkness of more and more accumulated density; their manners more depraved, and the torpor of ignorance more confirmed. The statements of all writers are now unanimous. Public schools, indeed, existed, but they were little frequented; and if a man occasionally appeared, whom his contemporaries regarded with admiration, the extreme rarity only served to confirm the extraordinary infelicity of the times. Even the learned, though ever partial Baronius*, looking forward to the series of unworthy prelates, who would soon disgrace the Roman see, hesitates not thus to characterize the age: "We now enter," he says, "on a period, which, for its sterility of every excellence, may be denominated *iron*; for its luxuriant growth of vice, *leaden*; for its dearth of writers, *dark*." The discriminating fitness of these epithets, in their direct application, is not easily apprehended.

On a former occasion†, before I proceeded with my subject, looking towards Italy, I observed: "What causes, in a gradual but sure process, had conducted the human mind to this temporary state of ruin, we have beheld visibly unfolded; and the reader, whose view I wish to confine to its proper object—who has already witnessed the chair of Peter partially degraded by some unworthy men—will be prepared to

* Ad. an. 900.

† History of the *Papal Power*, M. S.

expect, in the undeviating progress of human depravity, that characters less pure will contrive to invade that sacred seat. He has often deplored the misjudging policy of many pontiffs, who, under the imposing profession of extending the influence of religious truth, left nothing untried by which they might accomplish the aggrandisement of the Roman see. Hence they acquired wealth, and temporal sovereignty, while, they, at the same time, gradually enlarged the boundaries of their ecclesiastical jurisdiction. The apostolic chair, thus surrounded at once by the combined attractions of power and riches, became an object of envy; and minds of the highest ambition began to aspire to it, as the point where that desire would experience the most extensive gratification."

When we consider the factions which for more than half the century, oppressed the city of Rome; the efforts of the neighbouring princes to foment discord; the unbounded influence—within the walls—of three Roman ladies of patrician descent, the mother Theodora, with her daughters Marozia and Theodora; with the political and the amorous intrigues which they exercised; the characters of many of the bishops, particularly of the three Johns, X, XI, XII, who, by the wiles of those women or by agents equally unworthy, were raised to the papal throne—when these things are considered, we cannot but assent to the propriety of the reproach, with which the cardinal has branded the age, at least within the precincts of Rome. The laws, were either entirely silent, or when they spoke, their voice was not heeded; the admonitions of justice were suspended; interest or corruption, violence or fraud, universally prevailed. These causes were more than enough to rouse

BOOK III. the indignation of a writer, less a friend to virtue, to discipline, and to the honour of his church; but Muratori, though he admits the principal facts, is less intemperate in his remarks; and the reader may well indulge in a smile, when he beholds the learned Italian thus seriously labouring to extenuate the severity of Baronius, or to blunt the edge of his invective*.

"With too much truth," observes the historian of Italian literature†, "has the epithet *iron* been applied to this unfortunate epoch, during which the chair of Peter was often disgraced by its occupant. The monstrous excesses, which then abounded, fill all the records of the times. To me it is a gratifying reflection, that the pursuit, in which I am engaged, exempts me from the necessity of relating facts which, it were to be wished, could be buried in eternal oblivion."

I may solace myself with the same reflection; but, if this cause abridge the labour of narration, it must likewise be diminished by the certain conviction, that, in a period of *iron*, of *lead*, and κατ' ἐξοχην of *darkness*, to look for learned men or the resources of learning must prove a fruitless expenditure of time. It is allowed by the author, just quoted, who is ever jealous of the honour of his country, that Italy could now boast of only two bishops, who, in the department of ecclesiastical literature, merited the name of learned; and of

* See the *Annali d'Italia* and the *Annals* of Baronius of the tenth century.

† T. III. l. 3.

whom one was certainly a stranger, and the other not certainly an Italian, Atto of Vercelli, and Raterius of Verona. Schools, as I observed, were not unfrequented, even in the villages, where the ministers of religion taught, and to which children might be sent; but grammar, or at most the *trivium*, and that rudely inculcated, comprised the whole circle of instruction. It is also remarked, that, when this or more, that is, dialectic or the art of logic, was attempted; it was always done with a reference to, or as in connexion with, the study of theology. For, as what learning there was, was exclusively confined to the ecclesiastical order, monks or churchmen, it was natural that instruction should be directed to them alone. And as the theology then in vogue was jejune and contentious, the character of all preparatory studies*—would naturally possess the same characteristics.

When discipline was generally relaxed, and vice triumphant; the votaries of every science must be few, and the clerical order cannot well be expected to be less dissolute than the laity, whom their example had corrupted. Authors have remarked, that, besides the beard, and the hair, and the length of the upper garment, no difference was discernible between the ecclesiastics and the people, and much less could any difference be traced in their conduct, their habits of life, or their conversation. This kind of parity had seldom been seen. And as study, such as it generally was, served but little to improve the ecclesiastical character, worldly

* Murat. Dissert. 43. Brucker, t. III, p. 632.

BOOK III. men despised the pursuit. In Rome—which, at all times, may be regarded as a standard above the common level of other cities or countries—so low was the general condition, that—as a writer, almost contemporary with this precise period, informs us—when there was a wish to express extreme contempt for an adversary, it was usual to call him *Roman*, "comprising in one word whatever was base, timid, mercenary, luxurious, and false*." Yet, whatever may have been the vices of this people, and however gross their ignorance, they still retained some portion of their native wit. When John XII. was cited before a synod, convened by the Emperor Otho in the church of St. Peter, and he refused to appear, the fathers retorted on him the excommunication, with which he threatened them, in the following words: "Judas," they say, "with the other apostles, had received from his master the power of binding and loosing; but no sooner had he betrayed him, than the sole power which he retained was to bind himself." The crimes which they charged on their bishop, and of the truth of which they had undoubted evidence to produce, were comprised under the heads of murder, sacrilege, simony, gross debauchery, incest, and blasphemy†.

What regularity of manners, and what remains of literature, if the word may yet be used, were still in existence, were found wi[illegible] walls of convents; where there were some

* Liutprand. Leg. ad Niceph. Phocam.

† Liut. Hist. l. vi. c. 6.

men, at least, of application, of whom not a few devoted their talents to the composition of *Annals* and *Histories*, which partook largely of the characteristic rudeness of the times, but which are still valuable for their air of candour and of truth*. Other monks employed themselves in what they called *Treatises* of morality, which generally consisted of passages strung together from the writings of the Latin fathers, the canons of councils, and the decrees of Popes; while they, who were esteemed best qualified, were engaged in the arduous task of education. But, though the doors of the schools were open to all, their pupils, at this time, were seldom any other than the young men who were destined for the monastic life. These were initiated in the elements of all knowledge which were contained in the *Trivium* and *Quatervium*, denominated the liberal arts; but we know, what were the absurd maxims and disgusting precepts within which they were contracted; in which no space was left for classical erudition; for ethics properly so called; for natural history, or philosophical experiment. And if it even happened, in the narrow circle to which they were restricted, that a genius of more than common powers advanced beyond the confines of his contemporaries, he was suspected of a secret intercourse with the world of spirits, and his acquirements were registered with the theories of the black art.

I have already remarked, that the transcription of books was a very favourite occupation with the monks; and as the

The Monks not assiduously employed.

* See many of these *Histories*, edited in the great work of Muratori.

BOOK III.

ability of fair and legible writing was alone absolutely necessary for the undertaking, and as that could be mechanically acquired, it might often happen, in the number of copyists, that many understood nothing of the language of their author. At no time was this more probable, than in the darkness of the tenth century. Hence—though it is not said, that other causes might not sometimes produce them—many errors would arise with which, at the revival of letters, the copies of ancient works were discovered to abound; and which have contributed to compose that mass of various readings, upon which the sagacity of modern scholars has been so vigorously exercised. Yet more mistakes were, perhaps, to be apprehended from the pretenders to learning or the half-learned, than from the decidedly ignorant; for while the latter would labour only to fulfil the orthographical duties of their task, the former, in the vanity of their powers, might often be tempted to alter the text, and to accommodate the sense to the level of their own slender capacities. The learned Jerom had, long ago, censured this mischievous arrogance in the copyists of his own times: "They write down," says he, "not what they find, but what they seem to understand, and expose their own blunders, whilst they affect to correct the mistakes of others." Errors, affecting the sense of the author, which have been thus introduced, have been of the worst species; whilst a remedy has been more readily found for the gross oversight or neglect of the ignorant or the idle, in substituting one letter for another, or a word which has no meaning for one which had *.

* See more on this subject in Muratori, Dissert. XLIII.

But, if the labour of the monks had only been as *assiduous*, as is often pretended—considering the number of their establishments in all countries—how did it happen that the copies of works were so scarce? The high price of parchment or vellum might account for the incompleteness of some works; and the same cause would also occasion a general scarcity. Besides, the work of transcription was tardy in its progress, particularly where pains were taken to exhibit splendid editions. To this must be added, the insecurity of the times, and the incursions of barbarous invaders, by whom the monasteries were often plundered, and their libraries destroyed or dispersed. Still I am not satisfied; and the stubborn fact of *scarcity* inclines me to suspect, that the pens of the monks were less constantly employed, than many would induce us to believe. In the most wealthy convents, where libraries were chiefly formed, a short catalogue was sufficient to comprise the number of their books; and the price, to those who were disposed to purchase, was exorbitant. In the lives of the Popes, and of many bishops, the donations of books are recorded, as acts of signal generosity; and as deserving of perpetual remembrance, the gift was sometimes inscribed even on the monuments of departed benefactors. In the preceding century, Lupus, abbot of Ferriares in Gaul, in a letter to Benedict III. requests the loan of the *Commentaries* of St. Jerom on the prophet Jeremiah, of which he observes that no complete copy could be found any where in France; and with them Cicero's work *De Oratore*, the *Institutions* of Quintilian, of both which they possessed only some parts, with the *Commentary* of Dona-

BOOK III.

tus* on Terence. "These works," he adds, "if your holiness will kindly transmit them to us, shall be copied with all possible celerity, and be faithfully restored†."

The scarcity then of books, of which innumerable proofs might be adduced, may be considered as the *cause* of ignorance, as well as the *effect*. More knowledge, or the desire of acquiring more knowledge, which was excited in happier times, would have kept alive curiosity, and have multiplied the means of instruction and the materials of knowledge. The various productions of Grecian and Roman taste, in the proudest era of their literature, were circulated only by written copies. The will then was now wanting; and with the want of this I charge the monks. But, it is said, that the works on which they laboured most, such as the writings of the Latin fathers, were voluminous; and they were besides often called to transcribe and embellish the books which were used in the service of the church. This I admit; and I admit moreover, that, from the absence of a critical taste, they might often be induced, or perhaps commanded by their superiors, to lavish much labour on some productions of little value. But yet, when it is considered how numerous the

* See Bib. Lat. t. II.

† See the *Dissertation* before quoted, also the 2d Dissert. in Warton's *Hist. of English Poetry*, in which are collected many curious facts of the paucity and dearness of books at this time.

hands were—and that these continued to multiply, as the fashion of monastic institutions became more prevalent, there is at least room for surprise, that so little should have been performed. After the lapse of little less than a thousand years—from the fall of the Western empire to the revival of letters—during which, we are told, that the monks, in all countries, as convents were erected, prosecuted the labour of copying books and furnishing their libraries, we know what a dearth there still was; and that, after the most diligent search, only a few copies could be discovered of the most valuable works, and these mutilated and damaged; whilst others were irreparably lost. We have, however, reason to be thankful that some were preserved; and I am not willing to withhold from the monkish labourers their due portion of praise, however slender might be their pretensions*.

In every great abbey, I should have observed, was an apartment called the *Scriptorium*; in which the writers were busied in transcribing the service-books for the choir, and such others as were deemed proper for the library; and estates were often granted for its support. This, however, was a provision more recent than the times of which I am speaking. The historian of *our poetry* † enumerates many works, which were thus transcribed, amongst which are some

* Warton (Dissert. II.) is rather more favourable to the monks.

† Dissert. II. The passage, to which I allude, is highly curious, and shews with what diligence he had investigated the subject.

BOOK III. of the Latin classics. These were sometimes illuminated, and various ornaments added to their covers.

The Reigns of the Othos.

The second part of the century, in Italy especially, passed under better auspices. Otho, surnamed the Great, became emperor and king of Italy; and though he was himself unlettered, yet, by a firm and pacific government, he dissipated faction, and established that security, which is propitious to the arts. We are told by a writer of some antiquity*, what were the exercises of the pupils in the most celebrated schools; for such, we may presume, that school to have been to which Otho sent his eldest son. "The colleges of the canons," he says, "were the seminaries, in which young men were instructed in heavenly wisdom, and in the polite arts; at the same time, they had their regular exercises in prayers and readings in the church, where the bishop, as the principal moderator, and inspector of learning and ecclesiastical discipline, presided. The son of the most excellent Emperor Otho was thus early instructed at Hildesheim; where he learned ecclesiastical science, attended the public prayers with his equals, and assisted in the music of the church."

In 962, Otho was crowned Emperor by the profligate Pontiff John XII. about six years after which, we read of the second embassy of the historian Liutprand to the Byzantine court. Of this embassy I shall elsewhere speak, and of

* Joach. Cureus Annal. Siles. quoted by Brucker, t. III.

the circumstances which attended it. Liutprand was certainly not destitute of learning: his mind was irritable and ardent, and the tone of his voice, if we may believe his own statement, peculiarly sweet. In early youth he had learned the Latin language, if it was not his native speech; in his embassies to Constantinople he acquired some knowledge of the Greek tongue; and in a Roman council we find him interpreting to the fathers the different addresses of Otho, to whom the Saxon, or German language was alone familiar. But his style, though not repulsive, is rugged and inharmonious; his language, when he deemed himself offended, is scurrilous, and often grossly abusive; and the portraits which he draws of vice, are indelicate and disgusting. Yet Liutprand was bishop of Cremona. "In that iron age," observes Muratori*, "he rose above his fellows; and his writings may even now be read with pleasure, notwithstanding the asperity of their style, which was truly congenial with the character of the times."

The pedantry of Liutprand, and the general depravity of Italian manners, may well have disgusted the noble mind of Otho, and have rendered him careless of their fate; but Germany engaged a greater share of his attention. Here he laboured to extirpate ignorance. He founded and endowed many sees; appointed bishops; erected convents; and opened schools. But his generosity has been censured, as improvident. Succeeding ages, certainly, experienced the bad ef-

* Pref. in Liutp. Rer. Ital. Serp. t. II. p. I.

BOOK III.

fects of the wealth and honours, which he lavished with too little discrimination on the church. He died in 973. For his military exploits, his religious ardour, his love of justice, and his many luminous virtues—which the surrounding darkness only rendered more conspicuous—he was deservedly styled the *Great*.

The successor of Otho was, the second of the name, who was educated among the canons of Hildesheim. In moral qualities, however, his did not equal those of his father: and though his superior in learning, it does not appear, that he did much for the cause of letters. Their cause seemed to have become desperate; and where no success could be expected, why undertake a vain and fruitless toil? As the fluctuations of mind, besides, had in all countries now generally taken one common level, few could be sensible of their own degraded state, or, from a consciousness of inferiority, propose to themselves higher models of imitation. Though all was low, yet there was some gradation of acquirements; and Liutprand might claim and receive from his contemporaries a degree of fame, as warmly and as loudly bestowed, as the purest breath of taste had, at any time, conferred upon her most admired favourites. Otho possessed one peculiar advantage. His queen was a Grecian princess, Theophano, the daughter of the Emperor Romanus; who, with the harmonious accents of her native tongue, probably brought some taste for letters to the Western Court. This taste had much declined at Byzantium, but, compared with that of other countries, it might still be deemed refined and classical. The princess is represented as highly accomplished: possessing brilliant talents, and a pleasing elocu-

tion. From her then, it may be presumed, that Otho learned the Greek language, in which he is said to have excelled; and from her he might have learned, more than from the canons of Hildesheim, to appreciate the importance of literary attainments. But the various enterprises and incessant wars, in which, from the death of his father, he was engaged, served to abstract his attention from more peaceful occupations; and he died within ten years, after incurring the epithet of *sanguinary* *.

What might have been done by his son, Otho III. now an infant, educated under the eye of his mother, and tutored by the ablest professors of the age, must be left to conjecture. Contemporary writers—the worth of whose panegyric is well understood—speak rapturously of his acquirements; and if these had taken a right direction, we might have had reason to lament the immaturity of his death. He lived to see the end of the century, but not that of his twenty-second year †.

Literature of England.

After all that has been said, it is necessary for me to recall from the silence of oblivion, the names of those, who, during these last years, whether in Germany or England, if we may give credit to their chroniclers, cultivated the various branches of knowledge with success. Even modern

* See the authors quoted by Muratori, Annal. d'Italie t. v.

† Ibid. t. vi.

BOOK III.

writers * still shew a partiality to Britain; where they say, that the successors of Alfred evinced a laudable zeal, in supporting the institutions which he had formed; where, whilst all erudition had nearly vanished away in other regions, learned men still flourished; and where, in the schools of Oxford, able masters continued to preside.

St. Dunstan.

Among the foremost, we are told, in the career of science and of every virtue, stood the celebrated archbishop Dunstan. He had been educated in the monastery of Glastonbury, of which he afterwards became abbot. This place, according to his biographer †, which as yet was not conventually regulated, was the resort of many illustrious men, versed in sacred and secular science, chiefly from Ireland. The natives of that country were, he adds, fond of this vagrant life; and establishing themselves at Glastonbury—because its sequestered situation had rendered it eligible for their purposes, and principally because "their great patron St. Patrick had there lived and died." These literary settlers opened schools, and admitted the children of the nobility, whose liberality, they trusted, would compensate for the scanty produce of the neighbouring country. Among those scholars was Dunstan; and we have afterwards an account of his talents, and of the studies which he principally pursued. "They were the sciences of the philosophers," he says,

* Brucker, t. III. p. 638. More partial are Bale, and Pits, and Leland.

† Osbernus in vitâ St. Dunst. He lived in the 11th century.

"which antiquity has defined to be the knowledge of those things, which are, and that may be in another manner; such as magnitudes, of which some are fixed and without motion, while others are ever subject to change, and at no time are at rest; and such as multitudes, of which some are so *per se*, *alia in ratione posita*." Impressed with the notion that these sciences contained the seeds of great perfection, Dunstan applied to them with uncommon ardour. The progress which he made was proportioned to his zeal; but instrumental music, was what appears chiefly to have captivated his affections. "Like the prophet David, he would sometimes seize his psaltery; or strike the harp; or swell the organ; or touch the cymbal." In the mechanical arts he was likewise remarkable for his ingenuity. He could paint, write a beautiful hand; carve figures; and form gold, silver, brass, or iron, into whatever shape he pleased.

We are told, by another author*, that while the mind of Dunstan was in his early years nearly absorbed in sacred studies, he dedicated some hours to certain secular pursuits, passing lightly over the poets, and such arts as are of little practical utility; but cultivating, with more care, the study of arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music. In the progress of these studies, he remarks, that the Irish teachers promised much, while they shewed little skill in the formation of the Latin letters, and in their correct pronunciation. "But it was music," he adds, "performed by himself or others, by

* Guil. Meildien. ap. Leland. de Script. Brit.

BOOK III.

which the soul of Dunstan was most charmed. Closing his books, he laid his hand on the harp, and elicited sweet melodies from the sounding chords." On a particular occasion, he took this harp with him, and, while it hung on the wall—himself being employed in drawing a pattern which a lady had requested him to delineate, as if to cheer his labour, and in tones the most accurate and pleasing, it spontaneously warbled the air of a well-known anthem. The company were seized with astonishment, and soon expressed their conviction, that Dunstan possessed more science than properly belonged to man. "The braying ass," observes the author, "was once heard to utter human sounds: but till now no harp was heard to play, as did the harp of Dunstan*."

Relatively to the times then, when the smallest ascent above the common level of gross ignorance, excited wonder, we may readily allow; that the archbishop was an accomplished man; and the marvellous tales, with which the histories of his life abound, are not necessary to convince us that, in other respects, he was great and good; however much certain parts of his public conduct, when he came into power, may by some have been deemed deserving of censure. An author † of rather later date, having mentioned, "that the great luminaries of the age in Britain, shone like stars from heaven," observes of Dunstan, that, after Alfred, the liberal

* Osbernus ut sup.

† Wil. Malmesb. De gest. Reg. Angl. l. II.

arts were much indebted to his exciting zeal. He repaired, he adds, munificently, many royal foundations; was a terror to profligate kings and nobles; and a steady support to the poor and weak. As an instance of his ingenuity, it is also mentioned, that he contrived a number of marks or points of gold or silver to be fixed, at certain distances, in the drinking cups of the time, by which each man knew the measure which he might swallow, and could not for shame exceed. The mental qualities and rare endowments of Dunstan, are thus summed up in a few words: "So great was his insight into things, and such his powers of expression, that nothing could be more profound than his invention; nothing more embellished than his diction, nor more sweet than his utterance*."

Let this suffice for England; and, indeed, did not the writings and general character of the age evince the darkness, in which it was immerged, who, in perusing the last lines, would not feel himself carried back to the golden days, when Plato lectured, or when Cicero harangued†? I may also remark that the reader, who has not the original passages before him, is not unlikely to form an erroneous judgment from the translations of them which it is requisite to make in a work which is designed to be generally read. It would perhaps be more satisfactory to a few, if the passages were given in their native dress; and others may think that, if translated, their gross and barbarous idiom should be preserved. Yet, would this be endured?

---

* Osbern. ut sup. † History of the Papal Power, MS.

BOOK III.

Gerbert, afterward Sylvester II.

Passing over the names of the few scholars who, at this time, helped to preserve from total extinction, the feeble lamp of science—in the schools of France, of whom the principal was Abbo, the abbot of Fleury, with pleasure I turn to Gerbert, who is better known by this name than by the appellation of Sylvester II. which he derived from the papal chair. On a former occasion*, in entering on the transactions, in many of which he was engaged, I said: Before I relate these occurrences, it is proper that the reader be made acquainted with a man, who from his talents, from the ambition which those talents inspired, and from the high character which he held in the church, and in the cabinets of princes, was enabled to take a conspicuous lead in the general transactions of the times. It is besides pleasing, from the gloom by which we have long been enveloped, to contemplate the luminous transit of a genius, which seemed to breathe some freshness of animation into the drooping remains of the liberal arts.

Gerbert was born in Aquitaine, of mean parentage, and received his first education, where, at that time, it could alone be procured, in a neighbouring convent. Hence he was transferred, if he did not make his escape, to the family of a Count of Barcelona, in which he prosecuted his studies under the care of a Spanish bishop, whom he accompanied from Spain to Rome. He was introduced to Otho the Great; attached himself to Adalbaron, the archbishop of Rheims,

* History of the Papal Power, MS.

whom he attended to his see; and returned with him, the following year, about 972, into Italy. His progress in learning, which comprised geometry, astronomy, the mathematics, mechanics, and every branch of subordinate science, is described by this time, to have been prodigious. His residence in Spain, during which he visited Cordova and Seville, had enabled him to profit by the instruction of the Arabian doctors. He was now promoted, by Otho, as the first reward of his talents, to be abbot of the celebrated monastery of Bobbio, in Lombardy. He became preceptor to the grandson of his patron; and afterwards withdrawing from his abbey, in which he had at no time experienced any satisfaction, he again joined his friend, the archbishop of Rheims. Here he had leisure to prosecute his favourite studies, while, as his letters* shew, his abilities were usefully engaged in different political transactions; here, in addition to the superintendence of the public schools, the education of Robert, the son and successor of Hugh Capet, was entrusted to his care; and here he was laudably employed in collecting books from every quarter, in impregnating his mind with their contents, and in diffusing among his countrymen a more noble ardour, than the sports of the field, or martial achievements, or the excess of the table could inspire. It is said that the effects of his enlightened zeal, were soon visible in Germany, Gaul, and Italy; and by his writings, as well as by his example and his exhortations, many were animated to emulate their master's fame, and caught by the love of science, to abandon

* Bib. p. 8, t. x. as collected by Papyrius Masson.

BOOK III.

the barbarous prejudices of the age. In his epistles, Gerbert cites the names of various classical authors, whose works he possessed, though often incomplete; and it is plain, from the style of those epistles, from which the scholar will not turn with disgust, that he was by no means incited by a vain ostentation, in the expenditure of his wealth, in employing copyists, and exploring the repositories, in which the mouldering relics of ancient learning were still to be found.

Though, if we may believe his encomiasts, the genius of Gerbert embraced all the branches of learning, its peculiar bent was to mathematical inquiries. In these—when the barbarism of the age is considered, and no comparison is instituted with modern times—he may be said to have advanced no inconsiderable way; but, in itself, his knowledge was small, and his geometry, though easy and perspicuous, was elementary and superficial. What was the extent of his astronomical science, does not appear; but, what chiefly deserves notice, is the ingenious facility with which he aided his own progress, and rendered discovery more palpable, by combining mechanism with theory. He constructed spheres, the arrangements of which he describes*; observed the stars through tubes; invented a clock, which with some accuracy marked the hours; and, by means of wind, pressed forward by a strong current of water, contrived to fill brazen pipes of various lengths and sizes, so as to produce musical sounds. This instrument he calls an *organ*, more noisy, as we may

* Ep. 148.

presume, and less melodious than the harp of Æolus, or that of Dunstan. Music, which was then deemed an essential member of the *quadrivium*, or higher sciences, necessarily engaged the attention of Gerbert. It is also said, that we are indebted to him for the Arabic numerals, which he, probably, derived from the school of Cordova *. Such discoveries and such attainments were indications of no common mind; but while they excited admiration in some, they called forth horror in more. They could not contemplate the lines which he was seen to draw; nor his solemn attention when viewing the face of the heavens; without conceiving that he was employed in magical operations, and held an illicit intercourse with the Devil and his angels. His great acquirements, and the whole success of his life, relates a puerile legend, were owing to a compact, into which he entered with Satan, when he withdrew from the convent of Fleury †.

The philosopher was employed, as I have described him, in the schools of Rheims, when his friend the archbishop Adalbaron died; and it seems that he had designed him for his successor, and that his intention was approved by the clergy and the bishops of the province. He did not, however, succeed to the vacant see. The throne of France was at this time occupied by Hugh Capet, who owed his elevation to the best of all titles, the choice of the people; though Duke Charles, the uncle of the last king, and the hereditary claimant, still survived. Charles had a nephew named Arnulphus,

* See Brucker, t. III. p. 647. † Ibid.

BOOK III.

who had been bred to the church. To conciliate his good-will, and through him, if it were practicable, to soften the resentments of the Duke, Hugh proposed to seat him in the chair of Rheims. He gladly accepted the offer; and took an oath of fealty to the king. No tie could bind the treacherous priest; for he soon afterwards surrendered the city into the hands of his uncle; and, in order to disguise his perfidy, permitted himself to be made a prisoner. Negotiations and controversy were the consequences of this event. Both parties applied to Rome; where meeting with no success, the king resolved to bring the matter before the bishops of the province; and for that purpose summoned a Synod to meet at Rheims. It was now about the year 991.

With philosophic resignation Gerbert had submitted in silence to the appointment of Arnulphus. Even, for some time, he professed himself his friend, and espoused his views in favour of Duke Charles, till a change of circumstances, or more mature reflection, convinced him, that the path of honour, if he wished to make it the path to preferment, must be sought under the more auspicious standard of Hugh Capet. From this time he solemnly renounced every engagement with the faction of Arnulphus; and he was the warm friend of the national king, and in the fullest enjoyment of his literary fame, when the council met.

It is foreign from my purpose to state the transactions of this council, in which the speech of the Bishop of Orleans was particularly remarkable for its eloquence, and for its severe reflections on the Roman court. It has been inti-

mated*, that it was Gerbert who collected, and, it is thought, modelled, agreeably to his own talents and personal views, the acts of the Synod. This is conjecture. Arnulphus, at all events, canonically convicted, or awed, as it is said, by terror, resigned the chair of Rheims, to which Gerbert was elected.

When the news of the transactions of the Rheimish Synod reached the ears of his Holiness, John XV. aggravated, as undoubtedly it was, by all its irritating circumstances, his anger was inflamed; and he proceeded to excommunicate the bishops, who had been concerned in the deposition of Arnulphus, and the elevation of Gerbert. The latter now wrote various epistles†, of which I shall extract a passage from that to the Archbishop of Sens, who had been president of the council. This will evince the intrepid mind of the writer, as well as the comprehensiveness of his views in the midst of surrounding ignorance. "How do your enemies say," he proceeds, after some preliminary remarks, "that, in deposing Arnulphus, we should have waited for the judgment of the Roman bishop? Can they shew, that his judgment is before that of God, which our Synod pronounced? The prince of Roman bishops, and of the Apostles themselves, proclaimed, that God must be obeyed rather than men: and Paul, the teacher of the Gentiles, announced anathema to him, though he were an angel, who should preach a doctrine different from that which had been deli-

* Baron. Ann. sub an. 992. † Ibid.

BOOK III.

vered. Because the Pontiff Marcellinus offered incense to Jupiter, must all bishops, therefore, sacrifice to him*? I assert, boldly, that if the bishop of Rome shall sin against his brother, and, when often admonished, shall not obey the church, that bishop, I say, by the command of God, shall be deemed a heathen or a publican. The higher the rank is, the greater is the fall. If he think us unworthy of his communion, because no one of us will speak contrary to the doctrine of the Gospel, he cannot, on that account, separate us from the communion of Christ, nor deprive us of eternal life. The saying of Gregory, 'That the flock must fear the sentence of the pastor, whether it be just or unjust,' applies not to bishops. The people are the flock; not they. You ought not, then, for a crime which you acknowledged not, and of which you were not convicted, to have been suspended from communion; nor to have been treated as rebels, when you declined no council. The sentence issued against you, not delivered in writing, is an illegal act. Occasion must not be given to our enemies to say, that the priesthood, which is one as the church is one, is so subjected to one man, that, if he be corrupted by money, or favour, or fear, or ignorance, no one can be a bishop, unless, by the same means, he be rendered acceptable to him. Let the

* Baronius sub an. 992, who, from the opening of the Synod of Rheims, had loaded the name of Gerbert with the foulest terms of reproach, becomes at this moment outrageous. He admits the fabulous story of Marcellinus, on account of certain supposed doctrines, favourable to the pretensions of Rome, connected with it; but the inference, proposed by Gerbert, irritates him past all measure.

gospels, the writings of the apostles and the prophets, the canons inspired by God, and reverenced by Christendom, and the decrees of the Apostolic See agreeing with them, be the common law of the church. He who, through contempt, shall depart from this law, by it let him be judged: but peace rest on him by whom it shall be strenuously observed. Beware, not to abstain from the holy mysteries, which would be an acknowledgment of guilt. It becomes us to repel an unjust charge; to despise an illegal sentence."

In language not less energetic, and in a tone not less indignant, he wrote to the bishop of Strasburg. Three years now passed; but Rome finally obtained permission from the king to send a legate into France, before whom another Synod was to meet, and there discuss the respective merits of the rival prelates. It met at Mason, a town subject to the metropolitan of Rheims; but, besides Gerbert, a few abbots, and the Duke of Lorraine, only four bishops from the Eastern Gaul attended. The object of the meeting being explained, Gerbert rose*: "Most reverend fathers," he said: "this day I have long had before my eyes; and have earnestly desired it, since I took upon me this charge by the exhortation of my brethren, though not without the peril of my life. I was moved by a concern for the salvation of a perishing people, and by a respect for your authority, by which I deemed myself protected. The recollection of your repeated kindness filled me with delight; when I was informed by a sudden ru-

* Ap. Baron. sub. an. 995.

mour of your dissatisfaction, and that you reproached me with an act, which others considered as deserving of no common praise. I own, I was shocked; and the loss of your favour alarmed me more than the daggers of my enemies. But, at present, as heaven has propitiously brought me before you, I will briefly speak of my innocence, and state by what means I was raised to the Rheimish chair. After the death of the great Otho, when I had resolved never to quit Adalbaron, who was a father to me; ignorant of his views, I was designed by him for the priesthood; and when he departed this life, in the presence of many illustrious persons, he named me his successor. But though I stood on the firmness of the rock, I was rejected by simoniacal heresy; and Arnulphus was preferred. Yet I refused not to serve him, more faithfully, indeed, than I ought; till, at length, fully convinced of his treasonable practices, I renounced his friendship, and abandoned him with his accomplices, with no hope, as my enemies proclaim, with no compact, of succeeding to his honours; but barely not to participate in his crimes." He then mentions the proceedings against Arnulphus, and his canonical deposition, and adds: "By my brethren and the nobles of the land, I was again entreated to take charge of a dispersed and lacerated flock. Long time I resisted; and, with reluctance, finally gave my consent, well aware of the evils with which I was threatened. Such was the open candour of my conduct, such my innocence, and such, before God and you, was the purity of my conscience." He next replies to other objections; repeats, that the archiepiscopal burden had been imposed upon his shoulders; and adds, that if, on the occasion, there had been any deviation from the established rules, it must be ascribed to the misfortunes of the times, and

the hostile state of the country: *silent equidem leges*, says he, *inter arma*. He concludes: "I now return to myself, who was furiously menaced by the enemy, because the care of the people and the safety of the province were in my hands. Famine was at our doors; for our barns and our repositories were seized. The sword without, and trepidation within our gates, permitted no repose. The voice of your authority, by which our evils might be alleviated, was alone anxiously desired; as, we believe, that it is able to bring relief, not to Rheims alone, but to the disconsolate and almost fallen church of Gaul. This, under Providence, we now expect, and it is our common prayer, that it may be brought to pass."

How the eloquent harangue—of which the closing lines, as addressed to the four prelates, are not easily understood—was received, we are not told; nor whether any reply was attempted. It is related only, that he presented his speech to the legate, who went out with the bishops; and having consulted with them and the duke, he called in Gerbert, and entreated him to send a messenger, with instructions from the legate, to the king. To this he assented; on which another Synod was directed to meet at Rheims on the first of July. But when it seemed that the business was concluded, it was announced to him by the bishops, on the part of the legate, that, till the appointed Synod met, he must abstain from the celebration of divine service. Gerbert resisted the irregular injunction, and waiting on the legate, represented to him, "that no bishop, nor patriarch, nor the pontiff himself, had power to excommunicate any one, unless convicted on his own confession or otherwise, or unless, when canonically cited, he refused to appear; that he was chargeable with no

BOOK III. such misdemeanour; that he alone, of all the French bishops, had attended the legate's Synod; in a word, that, conscious of his innocence, he could not, by compliance, sign his own condemnation." He gave way, however, to the fraternal remonstrance of the metropolitan of Treves; and the council separated to meet again on the first of July. But that it met on the first of July, or, if it met, that any thing was done, cannot be collected from the obscure annals of the times*. Gerbert, at least, seems to have continued to discharge the duties of his See; and Arnulphus was still detained in the prisons of Orleans.

Thus a few months more passed; but when Hugh Capet, in the following year, 996, was dead, and a new pontiff, Gregory V. was urgent for the measure, Gerbert was removed or consented to relinquish his station, and Arnulphus once more occupied the chair of Rheims. The philosopher then joined his former pupil, the young Emperor Otho III. and being with him in Italy, when the Archbishop of Ravenna died, he was promoted to the vacant See. In the year 998, we find him sitting with the pontiff in a Roman Synod, in which it was decreed, that the French king Robert, who had also been his pupil, should quit his queen, whom he had married within the prohibited degrees of kindred; and the bishops, who had assisted at the marriage, were suspended from all communion, till they repaired to Rome, and made satisfaction.

* See Baronius sub an. 995.

In the spring of the following year, died Gregory V, in the flower of youth.

Otho, who was greatly affected by the death of the young pontiff, his cousin and play-fellow; and who was aware, from his own experience, and from that of his predecessors, of the inconstant temper of the Roman people, judged it prudent not to leave the appointment of the new bishop to their own capricious election. To this dignity, who could exhibit a stronger claim than Gerbert, the Archbishop of Ravenna? On him, therefore, the Emperor fixed; and he was ordained under the name of Sylvester II. But when we look back to the sentiments which he advanced in his letters, or which he espoused in recording the proceedings of the Rheimish Synod—though we shall not subscribe to the angry remark of Baronius, that he was "most unworthy of the apostolic chair, and its most cruel enemy"—we cannot but confess, that his promotion was a curious phenomenon in the history of human events. The cardinal, however, is so far just, as to allow, that he was "a lawful pope;" and, with some good-nature, he seriously labours to refute the idle tale, which had asserted, that he procured his elevation to the papacy by his former "compact with Satan*."

We now behold a philosopher, and who was confessedly the first man of the age, seated in the chair of Peter; but whatever may be his virtues, or his learning, or however ardent

* Baron. sub an. 999.

BOOK III. his wishes, too short a span will be allowed to his exertions, either to dissipate the ignorance of the ecclesiastical order, or to raise it from the abyss of degradation in which it was overwhelmed. That, from his tried character and the permanent impressions of his mind, his exertions would have been sincere, cannot admit of a doubt. He had made the Bishop of Orleans, in the Rheimish Synod, say, or he had said it for him: "Rome! how much thou meritest our tears, who, having produced the luminaries of former days, hast now spread around thee a portentous darkness, which future generations will mention with astonishment." How glorious then would to him have been the task of dispersing this hideous obscurity, and of bringing back the days of the Leos and the Gregories, whose names he feelingly repeats! But whatever were his views of reformation, they were finally closed by a period of three short years.

"Had any controversy, concerning the prerogative of the Roman See, or the rights of the episcopal order—similar to that in the cause of Arnulphus and his own—occurred during the pontificate of Sylvester, it would have been interesting to remark, by what process of argumentation, the successor of Peter would have evaded the obvious application to himself of his former doctrines and assertions. In a council held in Rome, at which Otho attended, in order to satisfy some complaints of the Bishop of Hildesheim, Sylvester shewed great moderation, and even permitted other councils, on the same subject, to be assembled in Germany; notwithstanding the solemn decision which was pronounced by his own Synod and himself. The legate Frederic, who was deputed from Rome, on the oc-

casion, appeared before the Germans with unusual splendour, himself habited in papal attire, as the representative of the pontiff, and his horses decorated with trappings of scarlet. In 1002 Otho III. died in Italy; and Sylvester, in the spring of the following year.

I shall not, I think, be blamed for bringing before the reader the principal events of the life of this extraordinary personage. He has seen him in the different capacities of a scholar and a teacher: admired his various attainments; listened to his eloquence; and followed him as he advanced, through a change of various fortunes, from high ecclesiastical dignities, to the zenith of ecclesiastical power. I have omitted to mention a work which he composed, on the *Art of Rhetoric*, and from which, he thinks *, the aspirers to eloquence may draw many useful instructions. He was himself, certainly, an able orator; and his language, though not always pure, yet vigorous and animated, appears by a pleasing deception, to obliterate, for a time, the consciousness of the forlorn period in which he lived. Indeed, had it been the fortune of Gerbert to have lived in some more happy æra, his intellectual height would have experienced some diminution. The surrounding shades gave a more striking magnitude to his talents. I must now add, that he was a poet; and though few are the specimens of his talents in this line, we may quote an epitaph, not void of poetical merit, which, when Bishop of Ravenna, he inscribed under the portrait of the philosopher Boetius.

* *Ep.* 92.

Roma potens dum jura suo declarat in orbe,
Tu pater et patriæ lumen, Severine Boethi,
Consulis officio rerum disponis habenas,
Infundis lumen studiis, et cedere nescis
Græcorum ingeniis: sed mens divina coercet
Imperium mundi. Gladio bacchante Gothorum,
Libertas Romana perit. Tu consul et exul,
Insignes titulos præclara morte relinquis.
Nunc decus imperii, summas qui prægravat artes,
Tertius Otto, suâ dignum te judicat aulâ,
Æternumque tui statuit monumenta laboris,
Et bene promeritum meritis exornat honestis*.

* Ap. Baron. t. x. in Append.

BOOK IV.

STATE OF LEARNING AND THE ARTS, IN THE ELEVENTH AND TWELFTH CENTURIES.

THE ELEVENTH CENTURY—THE ROMAN CHURCH: LEO IX.—THE NORMAN SETTLERS IN ITALY—ITS LANGUAGE AFFECTED BY THEM—GREGORY VII.—THE FICTITIOUS *DONATION* OF CONSTANTINE—NO CHANGE IN THE STATE OF LEARNING—PETER DAMIANUS—THE CHARACTER OF THE POETS AND HISTORIANS—BOLOGNA AND SALERNO—STATE OF FRANCE—THE NORMANS: THEIR CHARACTER—LANFRANC—POLITICAL STATE OF ENGLAND—THE NORMAN CONQUEST—INGULPH, ABBOT OF CROYLAND—ANSELM—EADMER: HIS CREDULITY, AND THAT OF THE AGE—THE CRUSADES—*TWELFTH CENTURY*—INCREASED INTERCOURSE WITH ROME: ITS EFFECTS—NEW MONASTIC ORDERS—ST. BERNARD—SCHOLASTICISM INTRODUCED—PETER ABELARD—PETER THE LOMBARD—ENGLAND—OXFORD—CAMBRIDGE—ENGLISH HISTORIANS—JOHN OF SALISBURY—PETER DE BLOIS—ARCHITECTURE AND OTHER ARTS.

BOOK IV. The Eleventh Century.

WE must quit the life and learning of Gerbert, on which we have been agreeably detained, like travellers on a spot of verdure, of shade, and of flowers, in the midst of a desert, again to wander in the dreary waste of ignorance and superstition. There is a sombre sameness in this view of the moral state of man, which is alleviated only by a few thinly

BOOK IV. scattered objects, such as Charlemagne, Alfred, or Gerbert, in the two preceding centuries. As I pursue my way, my eye is, I own, habitually turned to Italy; and though I am well apprized, that ignorance, and all the effects of ignorance, will long hold their sway in that country, yet a certain prejudice still impels one to fancy, that light must necessarily break forth among a people descended, in part, from so illustrious a stock; where the recollections of what their fathers were cannot cease to operate; and where the monuments of art, while they gratify the eye of the beholder, tend to inspire sentiments of taste, and connect the mind with literature and learning.

It cannot be expected, that, with the opening of a new æra, the enormities, the weaknesses, the irregularities, which had so often insulted the public eye, should, at once, cease to pollute and to degrade the pontifical chair. And in the midst of such scenes could literature look for patronage? We must, therefore, be prepared—sometimes to behold a repetition of similar scenes: and, on the greater stage of christendom, we shall be compelled to witness the clerical vices of concubinage and simony, showing themselves with a more unblushing front; a fatal contest, destructive of all generous patronage, between the priesthood and the empire; and to close the scene, we shall see the nations of the west, seized by the wildest enthusiasm, and contending for the double palm of victory and martyrdom, under the walls of Jerusalem; regardless of every object, which in their progress through nations more enlightened than themselves—might have directed their attention to more rational pursuits, or have excited their intellectual activity.

A writer of some celebrity* hesitates not to date the beginning of the revival of letters from the events of this century. With him I shall also follow these events; when the reader will be at liberty to judge for himself. Having observed, that many new principalities about this time arose, in different parts of Europe, as the Norman establishments in Sicily and in Britain—the author says: "When formerly the barbarians from the north over-ran the Roman empire, civilized and highly cultivated as it then was, destruction necessarily marked their progress; but now when their descendants conquered, finding ignorance and barbarism established, they dispelled both, and planted in their stead the improved arts and manners of polished life: for, guided by an invisible power, the concerns of this world are ever in motion, and pass from one state to another." This is loosely said. If the Normans, or other invaders, were themselves civilized, they would extend civilization; if barbarous, barbarism, notwithstanding the ever-changing series of human events, would be only the more permanently fixed. He does not prove, that the Normans were civilized, at least, more civilized than the Italians whom they conquered.

The Roman see was unworthily occupied for many years, particularly by Benedict IX. who was called to it by the venal Romans, when he had not completed his tenth year; but whose votes the treasures of his family had purchased. The writers of the age dwell with malevolent complacency

The Roman Church: Leo IX.

* Denina, Vicende della Letteratura, l. II.

BOOK IV.

on the vices of this infant pontiff; and he continued to improve in profligacy, till, unwilling any longer to bear the insult, the same people drove him from their city, and taking another bribe, elected the bishop of Sabinum in his place. This election also was soon annulled; when, "as there was not," says the historian *, "in the Roman church a man fit to occupy its first station," a German was nominated, and, on his death, in 1049, Leo IX. himself a foreigner and bishop of Toul, ascended the papal chair.

With Leo a better æra commenced in the Roman church, if we look to talents and moral excellence. His virtues would have rendered him conspicuous even in a more enlightened age; and the writers extol his piety, his zeal, his activity, his prudence, and his learning. We well know how to measure his learning; and when we are told by a contemporary clerk and the admirer of Leo †, what his education was, that---with other noble youths, he passed through the regular course of the *trivium* and *quadrivium*, with great applause, and was distinguished both in prose and verse, we may fairly conclude, that the acquirements of Leo were the acquirements of the age; and that the plan of studies still remained without any alteration. The work of this biographer, may, besides, be considered as a just sample of what the times could produce. It is extravagant in praise, coarse in diction, undiscriminating in the choice of facts, and replete with puerilities.

---

* See Baronius, an. 1046.

† Wibertus in Vita Leon. IX. t. III. Rer. Ital.

It is related, says he, by men of great veracity, that, in the city of Benevento, a cock was often heard to repeat the name of Leo; while a dog, in another quarter, no less piously uttered his supplications in articulate sounds. In the prelate, however, it evinced a quick insight into character, that when on his way to Rome, he accidentally met Hildebrand*, a monk, as is supposed, in the celebrated monastery of Clugni, he listened to his advice; courted his friendship; made him the companion of his journey; and, when seated in the pontifical chair, failed not to follow his plans for the overthrow of the reigning vices.

Had the zeal of Leo been restricted to these enemies, the failure of victory would have been attended by no disgrace; but, unfortunately, when young, he had learnt the use of arms, and gained some glory in the field. This prompted him---on the invasion of some territories of the church by the Norman settlers, who had recently been called into Italy---to collect an army, and to march against them. A battle was fought, near Civitella in Apulia, in which the pontifical forces were defeated, and the pontiff himself made prisoner †.

The Norman Settlers in Italy.

Having mentioned the Norman settlers, I must remark--- as the introduction of a new people has a necessary in-

* Afterwards the celebrated Gregory VII.

† Wibertus, the legendary writer of the life of Leo, conceals (c. 10, 11) the events of this fatal day; nor does Leo in his Letters (Conc. Gen. t. IX.) fairly state them. See Baron. sub an. 1052, 3.

BOOK IV.

fluence on the state of society and of letters---that they were of the family of those northern pirates who, in the preceding century, had fixed their abode in, and given their name to, one of the maritime provinces of France, and whom devotion first led into Italy. Their strength and prowess were admired; and, as the Greeks were still masters of Calabria---whence they threatened the Roman territories---and the Saracens were daily extending their inroads and their conquests, it was deemed expedient to implore the aid of these Norman freebooters, who were famed for their robust habits and their military qualities. They accepted the invitation: new bands daily arrived to swell their numbers; they acquired possessions partly by benefactions, as a reward of their zeal, and more by rapine. The weak vassals of the Byzantine throne were subdued; and when the Normans---under their chieftain Humphrey and his brother Robert, surnamed Guiscard---fought at Civitella, the country of Apulia was subject to them. They had founded cities, and under their banners, they could number three thousand horsemen, rich in spoil, inured to arms, and flushed with victory *.

Its Language affected by them.

What effect the introduction of a northern tongue had on the fluctuating and daily expiring idiom of the Latin language, cannot be ascertained. But we may confidently believe that, while the causes, which have been enumerated---arising principally from the admixture of barbarous invaders ---continued to operate, and, by a gradual but certain influ-

* See Muratori Annal. d'Ital. passim.

ence, to dissipate the primitive elements—which books alone could henceforth preserve—and to generate new forms of speech—the Norman settlers would contribute their share; and, as their numbers and their power increased, powerfully accelerate the effect. In an earlier period when the Goths and Lombards had established their dominion in Italy, the grammatical construction of the Latin language was more firmly fixed; and its comparative elegance and harmony more distinctly perceived. But the majestic language of ancient Rome was now greatly corrupted; colloquial intercourse was maintained by an uncouth jargon of intermixed idioms; the precious works of former days were seldom read, or read without any capacity to feel, or any desire to imitate their beauties. In this state of things, the final overthrow was certain; and it mattered little, how soon it came. A vehicle existed, which however rude, was sufficiently fitted for an interchange of familiar ideas; and he who desired more, might find it in books, or in the conversation of those, who aspired to the appellation of learned. But it must ever be considered as a proof, not only of the difficulty, but of the moral impossibility of utterly extirpating a language, which has universally prevailed among any people. Thus, though, through the lapse of many centuries, hordes of barbarous nations had successively invaded and occupied the soil of Italy, not only its primitive language, in some degree subsisted—whilst all the manners and habits of life were seen to change; but even few words of a strictly northern origin, were incorporated into it; and these, instead of retaining their native ruggedness, were assimilated to the character of the southern speech, and may be said to have been harmonized by its euphony.—I shall hereafter resume this interesting subject.

BOOK IV. Gregory VII.

In running over the history of the lives of the succeeding pontiffs, of Nicholas II., of Alexander II., of Gregory VII., and of Urban II.*, and in perusing their letters †—though we may discover many traits of real virtue, a strong zeal for the suppression of vice, and a zeal no less strong for the extension of the Roman prerogative, and the aggrandisement of its chair—we find them first doing but little for the advancement of science, and exhibiting no indications of taste or of eloquence. The style adopted by Gregory—better, perhaps, known by the name of Hildebrand—is agreeably to the characteristics of his mind, bold, vigorous, and impressive. On a former occasion ‡, speaking of his epistles, preserved in nine books, I said: With their perusal I have been often disgusted, for, by the side of the imposing language of piety and christian zeal, we, at every page, meet with sentiments and the undisguised exposition of views, such as might have fallen from the lips, and have been entertained by the minds of men, whose ruling passion was ambition, and whose object was the subjugation of nations. To effect this favourite purpose, to increase the jurisdiction of Rome, and to bend the refractory to his will, not only Italy, but Germany and other states were convulsed; and, it may be truly said, during the nearly twelve years of his pontificate, that the double sword of extermination, which he claimed, was never sheathed. Had the pursuits of science, and of the arts of peace, more congenial with the character of a first pastor, engaged the thoughts of Gregory,

* See Rer. Ital. Script. t. III. Baron. Annal. † Con. Gen. passim.

‡ Hist. of the Papal Power, MS.

warmly as he admired virtue, and sincerely as he detested vice, it is not easy to calculate the benefits to the state of man which his mighty powers might have achieved, during almost forty years—from the accession of Leo IX., who conducted him to Rome, to his own death in 1088—The administration of the Roman church, that is, as things then stood, the government of the christian world was in his hands. But the golden opportunity was suffered to escape; and, instead of using his influence to disperse the clouds of ignorance, and to awaken the dormant faculties of the human race, it is to be feared, that whilst he strenuously laboured to correct their vices, he availed himself of the abject superstition in which they were sunk to compass what was nearest to his heart, the aggrandisement of the Roman see.

The fictitious *Donation* of Constantine.

I mentioned, I think, the *spurious decretals*, which, with no honourable views, were palmed upon the world as the genuine productions of antiquity; and at this time a fiction was contrived, with more shameless effrontery, under the denomination of the *Donation of Constantine*. In a letter* to Michael Cerularius, the Byzantine patriarch, Leo IX. having reproached him with the indecency of his attack upon the Roman church, and having quoted, in honour of this church, as a decree of the Nicene council, words of a very different origin, with an audacious temerity of imposture, subjoins: "The most wise Constantine, revering the high character of our royal priesthood, conferred on Pope Silvester and his successors, not

* Ep. i. Leon. Conc. Gen. t. VII.

BOOK IV.

only the imperial power and dignity, but invested them with its insignia and its ministers, deeming it highly indecorous, that he, to whom God had given the empire of heaven, should be subject to any earthly command. And that no doubt of our dominion may remain; that you may not suspect our holy church of building its claim to power on vain and anile fables, we will produce some passages of that *grant*, which Constantine with his own hand laid on the shrine of Peter, that truth may be established, and falsehood confounded." He then gives the greater part of that forged instrument, in which the Roman pontiff is declared to be supreme in the church; the imperial power is conferred upon him; the city of Rome, the regions of Italy, and all the provinces of the west, are transferred to him; and Constantine moves the seat of empire to the east, "because it is not just, that an earthly prince should there exercise power, where it has pleased heaven to establish the head of the priesthood, and of the christian religion."

It was under the order of this supposed *donation*, that Nicholas II. made over to Robert Guiscard what lands in Apulia, and Calabria, and the island of Sicily, he had or should conquer, reserving the sovereignty to the holy see; that Gregory VII. claimed the kingdom of Spain, as, "by ancient constitutions," belonging to Peter and to the Roman church *; and that other pontiffs, as the occasions presented themselves, disposed of crowns, and particularly of the dominion of islands.

* Epp. l. iv. ep. ult.

It has been pretended, that owing to the gross darkness of the age, Leo, as well as his immediate successors, were really ignorant of the forgery of this celebrated diploma. Had it then never occurred to them to inquire how it happened that a decree, coeval with the splendid period of the fourth century, and so favourable to Rome, should have lain so long buried in obscurity? or, if Constantine, when he moved to the east, had transferred the western world to the successors of Peter, why the grant was never produced in so many opportune moments of contention? Were they so unread in history as not to have discovered what was the division of territory made by Constantine among his sons, and the consequence of that division in a line of princes down to the extinction of the western empire? or would they say, that the whole series of emperors, and after them, the various chiefs who occupied the thrones of Europe, were usurpers; or, that they held their crowns as vassals of the Roman bishop, their real sovereign and liege lord?

Michael Cerularius, surely, must have smiled, when he perused the contents of the singular epistle of Leo, contemning, as he did, the general pretensions of Rome and the rites of the Latin church, of which the patriarch of Antioch, at this time, observed, "that the precision which was found among the Greeks, nurtured in study, was not to be looked for there; and that if, on the points of the Trinity and incarnation, the Latins retained a sound faith, no more was to be expected from them*." But, whatever the Byzantine prelate, who was not

* Baron. Annal. sub an. 1054.

BOOK IV. immediately interested in the question, might think of the *donation*, it is certain, that the western christians, even the learned men amongst them, were awed into silence; or, most probably, they believed it to be genuine. They imagined it hardly possible that the bishops of the Roman church should invent or patronise a forgery. Among the many evils of the times, one was, that men of learning were more exposed to imposition than the ignorant. These read not; and if they possessed some share of sense they might reason, and, on many subjects, be inclined to follow what their reason suggested: but the former, in the vanity of their minds, seizing with avidity, and without discernment, whatever was said to bear the venerable impress of antiquity, would not hesitate to prefer forged decretals, or the diploma of Constantine, to the sober and really genuine productions of the most enlightened age. But I cannot be persuaded to think, that the extraordinary sagacity of Hildebrand did not penetrate the real character of the newly invented deed, on which he claimed for his see the dominion of the western world. These pretensions, I am aware, he sometimes rested on the broad basis of spiritual jurisdiction; but the name of Constantine carried weight to the ear of ignorance, and formed an authority which would not readily be questioned.

No change in the State of Learning.

Descending from this high order of priesthood, which no literature adorned, we find, in many parts of Italy, men, on whom the title of learned has been bestowed, and schools in which instruction continued to be communicated. But the internal dissentions of the country, rather caused than quieted by the interrupted presence of the emperors; the quarrels between the priesthood and the empire, in which all the orders of

the state were involved; and the general dissoluteness of manners, which was particularly striking amongst the clergy, in the vices of concubinage and simony---these, and many other associated causes opposed as powerful a barrier to the pursuits of science as any which we have hitherto considered. When, turning over the annals of Italy, men looked back to the days of the Goths and Lombards, they are said to have sighed for their return; for, though ignorance joined to barbarism then prevailed, there was a strength in the arm of government which checked the intemperance of faction, and, preserving social order, secured tranquility, at least, to the few votaries of science.

As it happened, in the scholastic controversies of Greece, some exercise was now given to the public mind by the question about investitures; and learning was displayed on both sides, as the champions in the quarrel inclined to the supposed rights of princes, or to the sacred prerogative of the church. The study of theology, indeed, in which many interests were, at all times, involved, though its modes of investigation varied, never ceased to be extensively cultivated.

Whilst the author of the History of Italian Literature* continues to lament the gloomy aspect of the times, he seems to fancy, that there had been some little advance to improvement; and it must be owned, that the list of his celebrated men, in every department of science, is not contemptible.

---

* Storia della Letterata Ital. t. III.

BOOK IV. But he travels far from home; and when in France, or England, a scholar presents himself, who, in the opinion of any writers, drew his first breath in Italy, he appropriates the glory to his country, and inscribes his name amongst the worthies. This may not be always just. The man of letters deems that country to be his own where he studied, where he lived, and to which he owes his fame. An intercourse of mutual advantage was maintained among the scholars of France and of Italy; and the greater number of scholars repaired to the point where the professors were most eminent. Of these, as they happened to find opportunities of obtaining a provision in the church, or in the state, many never returned; and as the use of the Latin language was common to all, it mattered little from what soil the professor or the pupil came. But the convenient intercourse of which I speak was principally supported by the monasteries. Monks of the same order, however separated by climate or country, considered themselves as children of the same family. When circumstances rendered it necessary, or expedient, they gave mutual aid; they had a common sympathy in the fame of learning, or the reproach of ignorance; and they passed, as commanded, from house to house, taking with them their proper stores, and dispensing where there was most need of the gift. It is evident, that such an arrangement, whilst the public schools remained attached to the convents, was productive of signal benefits; and in this and the following century, what learning there was, and what scientific men there were, were contained in, or proceeded exclusively from their walls.

Peter Damianus. One of these was Peter Damianus, first a recluse, and afterwards Bishop of Ostia, a man celebrated for his learning, and

without whose agency, through the lapse of many years, few concerns of moment were transacted. His letters, which are not void of elegance, and some of his other works, may be read with pleasure. Lamenting, on a certain occasion, after the battle of Civitella, the feuds which often arose between princes and the ministers of the altar, when the latter have had recourse to arms, he says: "If, in defence of the faith itself, it be never allowable to take up arms, shall squadrons draw their swords to protect its transient possessions? When good men prevail, they seek not the death of heretics nor of idolators; and shall the christian, for the vilest interest, be permitted to spill his brother's blood? Should it be objected, that the pontiff Leo, often engaged in martial enterprises, I must still maintain, that my words are not less true. The personal merits of men change not the nature of good and evil. Let every ecclesiastical cause be decided by the laws, or by synodical decrees, whilst we are unsullied by the reproach, to which every appeal to arms must expose us*." The opinions of Damianus were not always thus moderate—particularly on the character and extent of the Roman prerogative—when his appointment to the see of Ostia had brought him nearer to the source of power †. But few men, whatever

* Pet. Dan. ep. ad Firmin. ap. Baron. an. 1053. These just notions the cardinal treats as the wailing effusions of the discontented hermit; and the doctrine he pronounces to be *heretical*. "They who take from the chair of Peter one of the swords," he observes, (ibid.) "leaving only that which is spiritual, are, by the decisions of Catholic faith, convicted of heresy."

† See Baron. Annal. sub an. 1059.

BOOK IV.

may be their probity or talents, have sufficient hardihood or resolution to oppose a torrent, when the mass of society is hurried away by the stream.—The bishop of Veletri being chosen by a powerful faction to succeed to Stephen IX. under the name of Benedict, and Hildebrand, at the same time, causing another to be elected, Damianus hesitated; but he finally voted for the last named, observing, that, "could he have explained a single line in any homily, he would not have opposed the Bishop of Veletri." How this could be, while the Latin language was universally spoken, I know not; but the good bishop, let me add, was not obstinate if he was ignorant. He therefore submitted to his rival and withdrew *.

The Character of the Poets and Historians.

I have observed, that no inducements were wanting to the cultivation of the particular studies, with which the great controversies of the age were connected; but these topics of contention related to ecclesiastical policy, or order, as confined to the Latins; or to more abstruse inquiries, as pursued by the Greeks; and by no means tended to inspire better modes of intellectual cultivation. Indeed, seriously to imagine that this could be compatible with the general state of manners and pursuits, would be no less absurd, than to look for the blossoms of spring, whilst all vegetation is suspended by the inclemency of the winter's frost. But, eloquence, poetry, and history, and all the branches of the Trivium and Quadrivium still found admirers, and were studied. We are even told, that the Greek language was acquired by many, princi-

* See Baron. Annal. sub an. 1059.

pally for the purposes of disputation; but we are not told, that the classical authors of Greece were read.

For eloquence we must look to the sermons of preachers, or to the homilies of churchmen; for by no other men was the art regularly pursued. But poets, or rather versifiers, were numerous in every convent, whilst no subject appeared to be too intractable for their poetical versatility. In history, regarded merely as a repository of facts, there is no dearth of compositions *; and a passage occasionally occurs which is not positively repulsive. What most disgusts is the barbarous recurrence of rhymes. A poet of Mount Casino thus begins to sing the praises of St. Peter:

Agnus adest, *cuncti* qui tollit crimina *mundi;*
Protinus *Andreas*, quem post crucifixit *Egeas*,
Prosequitur, *tandem* lucem transegit; *eundem*
Cum Christo *fratri* post curat noti*ficari:*
Attrahit hunc *secum* valeat quo cernere *Jesum:*
Hunc Deus ut *vidit* Simonem, quem nomine *scivit*,
Nomen *mutavit*, quem Cepham ipse *vocavit.*

Among the many authors who wrote the life of the celebrated Countess Matilda, the friend of Gregory VII. and the great benefactress to the Roman see, Doniro of Canossa is the most distinguished †. He was personally acquainted with the lady, and writes from his own observation, stating many interesting particulars relative to her own life, and the lives of her progenitors.

---

* See Rerum Ital. Script. t. v. † Ibid. p. 337.

BOOK IV. We may lament, perhaps, that Doniro would be a poet, as nothing, certainly, can be less harmonious than his lines. His work is in two books, divided into chapters, and written in hexameter and leonine verses. Having mentioned how much Matilda was every-where admired, the poet adds:

Responsum cunctis hæc dat sine murmure turbis;
Hæc hilaris semper facie, placida quoque mente.
Hæc apices dictat, scit Theutonicam bene linguam;
Hæc loquitur latam quin Francigenamque loquelam.
Hæc Longobardos nutrit, regit, et facit altos.

To the knowledge of languages she joined, it seems, mental application; and she possessed many books:

Nullus ea præsul studiosior invenietur.
Copia librorum non deficit huicve bonorum,
Libros ex cunctis habet artibus atque figuris.

Doniro had intended to dedicate his work to the Countess, but her death frustrated the design; when he subjoined a final chapter, in which he describes the incidents of her last hour. The news of her death had shocked him much:

Lætitia mentis libros dum necto tabellis;
Nuncius advenit, qui me nimis obstupefecit,
Dicens extinctam prætaxatam comitissam.
Vires diruptæ mihi sunt, subitoque medullæ,
Palpebris dulcis somni dormitio fugit,
Visura frigeseunt, simul ossa caroque liquescunt,
Quæque laborabam sunt e manibus vacuata.

By an acrostic in the initial letters of the concluding lines, the poet mentions his name and office:

Presbiter hunc librum fineit, Monachusque Doniro.

Beside the historical versifiers, there were historians, or chroniclers, who did not rise above the level of barbarous prose; and of these, many works are still extant*. When contented to record the events of their own times, it is generally agreed, though puerile tales are often introduced, that they are sincere and deserving of credit; but when they have to relate the transactions of former years, no fable is too gross or unfounded for their belief. A certain Sicilian abbot, having compiled a history of the country †, addresses himself, at its close, to his Norman master, requesting his royal protection to his convent: "For if Virgil," he says, "the prince of poets, received from Augustus, as a recompence for *two verses* made in his praise, the government of Naples and of the province of Calabria, with better reason, in return for this work, and to promote the good of your soul, may we look for the reward which we petition." Yet, with all their defects, these chronicles are highly valuable; and Muratori, in his *Annals* of Italy, has drawn much from them. Without their aid, indeed, the dark series of these revolving ages would be little more than a rueful blank.

The homely talents, invigorated by a little industry, which

---

* See Rerum Ital. Script. t. v. passim. † Ibid. t. v. p. 644.

BOOK IV.

could form such historians and versifiers, as the times exhibited, were not sufficient to lead the student into the more thorny paths of philosophy, whether confined to the operations of mind, or extended to researches into nature and nature's laws. But, as we shall see, there were exceptions to this rule: and while Italy lamented that, by migrations from her soil, the pursuits of the sublimer sciences were neglected, she could boast, that her children carried their light into other regions. Either the troubles of the country, from which Rome herself was seldom free, or, what I rather believe, a real dearth of able masters, was the cause of these migrations *.

Bologna and Salerno.

Bologna now began to be celebrated for her schools of civil and ecclesiastical jurisprudence, to which men soon crowded for instruction from all parts of Europe; whilst medicine was, at the same time, cultivated with no less ardour at Salerno. What were the causes, in these cities, which gave rise to the peculiar studies of law and medicine, when both had so long lain neglected, may be sought in the authors who have discussed the subject †; but to me the event presents a favourable omen. I am well aware, that polite literature has no immediate connexion with the labours of the jurist or the physician, as a proof of which I might adduce the many ponderous comments, which soon proceeded from the schools of Bologna; and more particularly the celebrated *Medecina Salernitana*, a work in 373 leonine verses, which is at once a

* See Storia della Lett. Ital. t. III. also Annal. d'Ital. passim.

† See Tiraboschi, t. III. Giannone Storia Civil. di Napol. l. x.

specimen of the science and the barbarism of the age. But the powers of the mind were thus actively employed; and, however slow the progress, they would be led on from object to object, till, the field of inquiry being enlarged, the aid of the politer arts would be called in, the embellishments of style consulted; and the dawn of a better taste and a happier era begin.

I will now briefly mention, what was the state of learning in France and Britain, which will particularly bring before us those men, who, having quitted the soil of Italy, established themselves in those less genial climates.

State of France.

On the extinction of the Carlovingian race, in 987, often distinguished by the ridiculous epithets of the *bald*, the *stammerer*, the *fat*, and the *simple*, a new dynasty commenced in the person of Hugh Capet; and his successors, particularly Robert, shewed themselves not altogether unworthy of a throne. Robert himself was not void of science, as he had received instruction from the celebrated Gerbert; and even composed some hymns which were sung in the church. The state of learning under him, therefore, made a little advance; and, through the course of the century, some comparatively learned individuals adorned the church, and more were found within the walls of convents. Among the first were Fulbert, Bishop of Chartres; his scholar Berenger, Archdeacon of Angers, who, though a heretic and the author of many troubles, possessed talents, and was amply provided with scholastic subtlety; and the many champions whom the opinions of Berenger led into the field of controversy. Of these the

BOOK IV.

greater part were monks*; and let me repeat an observation which I have before made, that, though some real evil might be consequent on the rise of heresies, in the various periods of the church; yet, in such times as these, this evil was compensated by no small portion of good. The minds of many were roused into action; talents were elicited; researches were provoked; the writings of the ancient doctors of the church were read; in one word, men, who would have existed in apathy, and died in obscurity, emerged into notice, and rendered some service to the cause of truth.

The Normans: their Character.

The improving state of things in France calls me to a portion of history immediately connected with it, which, while it forms an interesting epoch in the events of that country, was soon to establish a new æra in our own. The northern pirates, who had long infested the western coasts of France, early in the tenth century, about the year 912, under their leader Rollo, again entered, and forcibly took possession of one of the maritime provinces. Hence they extended their depredations far into the country; when Charles the *Simple*, unable to resist their progress, listened to the cries of his people, and offered terms to the invaders. The terms were: that Rollo should espouse his daughter Gisela, and keep possession of Neustria, on condition, that he did homage for the territory, and embraced the christian faith. To men, who, it is said, were utterly void of all religion, there could be no room for

* See Dupin and other ecclesiastical writers.

hesitation: the conditions were accepted, and the leader and his army were baptized. These were our Norman ancestors.

When we look to the character of these men, as we saw it pourtrayed in their forefathers of the Gothic, the Vandal, the Lombard, and the Saxon line, and as it is delineated in themselves, when they first settled in Normandy, our astonishment cannot but be excited by the change which was soon produced. They were fierce and untractable, void of instruction, and addicted to no pursuits, but those of war and the chace. What could have so rapidly mitigated their barbarous habits? For when we speak of reformation in a people—from a state of savage existence to the arts and refinements of civil life, and from the most dense ignorance to the love of letters—the change seems to require the slow and laborious operation of many years. The comparative superiority of their neighbours, not in martial prowess, but in intellectual endowments, excited a desire of imitation; both curiosity and ambition prompted them to procure the means of instruction. The influence of religion came opportunely in aid of other motives, to generate habits of social order, and fix attention on the cultivation of the mind. The same sentiment which caused convents to be founded, promoted the erection of schools. It was now that masters came from a distance: and not many years of the ensuing century had elapsed, when the children of these originally piratical marauders rescued the southern parts of Italy from oppression, when they formed settlements, and introduced a new system of laws; the elements of a sounder polity; a spirit of liberty and independence.

BOOK IV.

Lanfranc.

Among the celebrated men who, at this time, visited Normandy, was Lanfranc, a native of Pavia. He lost his parents in early life, when, quitting his native city, he travelled in search of learning, and, after some years, returned, richly accomplished in the profane sciences and in the knowledge of the laws. In pleading, his eloquence was admired, and his decisions gained the applause of the most experienced magistrates. It is not known, why, when thus prosperously engaged, he again left Pavia, crossed the Alps, and traversed France; and, about the year 1036, fixed his residence at Avranches in Normandy, surrounded by many scholars. His mind was yet unsettled; and as the cloister was at that time the general asylum of piety and of learning, Lanfranc turned his eyes towards a monastery. He was shewn to that of Bea—so called from a rivulet which flowed by in the vale, and then just built by the Abbot Hellouin. To the walls of this sacred edifice he retired, with a view, it seems, of secluding himself from the world, and of prosecuting the contemplations of a sublimer philosophy. But his retreat was soon discovered; and so high was his reputation, and so ardent the general thirst of knowledge, that the confluence of pupils to attend his lectures almost exceeds belief. Amongst these were "clerks, the sons of gentlemen, masters of transcendent renown, powerful chiefs, and individuals of high nobility." Contemporary writers, or rather those nearest to the times, dwell with rapture on the praises of Bea and its academic exercises, in which the rules of a pure Latinity, are said to have been delivered, and the liberal arts, in their various branches, to have been taught. But his philosophy, as we might expect, was *dialectics*, or the art of subtle disputation;

and we hear of his scholars, that they every-where proclaimed their skill, and were prone to engage in controversy. A pedantic clerk, surrounded by a gorgeous train of attendants, waited on the philosopher. Lanfranc conversed with him; when, perceiving the extreme scantiness of his knowledge, he laid a cross-row or alphabet before him, "by an Italian pleasantry, ridiculing the ignorance of the pedant." But this instance of jocularity exposed its author to serious dangers *.

Many eminent scholars issued from the school of Bea. Amongst these were, the Pope Alexander II.; Guimond, Bishop of Aversa; Ives of Chartres, the restorer of the *jus canonicum* in France; the celebrated Anselm; and many others, whose names are recorded. Some years after this Lanfranc, being promoted to the See of Canterbury, visited Rome; and when the courtiers, seeing the respect which was shewn him by Alexander at his first audience, expressed their surprise, the pontiff observed: "It was not, because he is primate of England, that I rose to meet him; but because I was his pupil at Bea, and there sat at his feet to listen to his instructions †."

Among the admirers of Lanfranc was William, the young Duke of Normandy, the bastard son of Duke Robert, sur-

* See Milo Crispin. Wil. Malmesb. Gemmet. and others quoted by Tiraboschi, Brucker, and Fleury.

† In vita Lanf. c. 5.

named the *devil*. He admitted him to the most familiar confidence; he was directed by his advice; and he raised him to the government of a new abbey, which he had founded in the city of Caen. At this time, Lanfranc had been twenty years at Bea, a period highly interesting to the cause of literature, during which, it may be said, that from the celebrity of its schools, and the efforts of the many able men they had produced, a foundation was laid, on which the institutions, styled *universities*, were established, which, some years later, filled the provinces of Europe. Whilst Lanfranc was at Caen, he engaged in the Berengarian controversy *; and he was occupied in this and in the concerns of his convent when Duke William, having conquered England, invited the learned abbot, in the year 1070, to undertake the charge of the English church.

Political State of England.

Since we spoke of England—when Alfred reigned, and more recently when Archbishop Dunstan supported the character of learning by his talents, and encouraged the pursuit by his munificence—the annals of the times exhibit an interval of peculiar sterility. No period was ever more adverse to letters, in their humblest walks, and to the repose which their cultivation demands. Their warmest friend, therefore, in tracing back events, would find little to record, but war and devastation, which he could occasionally relieve only by

* On the manner of Christ's presence in the Eucharist. Berenger admitted the real presence, but denied the change of substance.

episodes of pilgrimages to Rome, by theological brawls, or legendary tales.

The Danes continued their incursions as occasion offered; and sometimes sailing up the Thames, the Severn, or the Humber, carried fire and sword into the heart of the country. In the mean time, such of their countrymen, as had obtained a right of settlement in former expeditions; or who, by an imprudent policy, were employed as auxiliary troops, increased the general consternation, by the outrages which they perpetrated, and by the willingness which they showed to co-operate with the external enemy. Resistance was indeed made, but often without effect; for with the occasional weakness of the reigning prince; the divisions of the nobility; the treachery of some; the cowardice of others; the want of concert in all; there could be no wisdom in council, no conduct in the field. The respite from pillage, or the departure of the foe, which was sometimes purchased by large sums of money, served only to invite the attacks of more needy adventurers. This was for many years, the melancholy state of things; when, in the reign of Ethelred, about the beginning of the eleventh century, and when the Danes were widely settled in many parts of the kingdom, the bloody scheme of a general massacre was adopted. To what extent it succeeded, cannot be shewn; but the barbarous policy proved most fatal to the actors. Sweyn landed; and from this period, what had before been related of the miseries of the country seems light, when compared with the scenes of devastation which were now every-where beheld. Ethelred fled, and prince Edmund, alone, for some time, withstood the shock; till he also died,

BOOK IV. and Canute, the son of Sweyn, in 1017, ascended the English throne*.

The Danes had previously embraced the christian faith; and the affinity of their language to that of the Saxon natives, and no striking discrepancy in manners and laws, seemed to invite both nations to coalesce into one united people. But the vindictive regrets of a conquered people are not readily effaced; and the conquerors, as is usual, affected a superiority, to which they might think that they were entitled by success. They even professed themselves better adepts in the art of social enjoyment; and aspired to more refined modes. It was observed by them, and not without disgust, that they combed their hair once a day; bathed themselves once a week; and frequently changed their clothes. These were deemed acts of effeminacy. What progress they had made in intellectual improvement is not related. Canute himself was, certainly, deserving of the throne which he had conquered; and, as soon as circumstances would permit, it seemed his wish, by an equal distribution of justice, to make all his subjects happy. There was much vigour in his government, and tranquillity every-where prevailed. He built churches, and repaired or endowed convents. His sense of security in his English dominions was such, that he twice visited the kingdoms of Denmark and Norway, of which he retained the sovereignty; and once undertook a pilgrimage

* See the various old English writers.

to Rome. Here he made a considerable stay. The motive which prompted this pious journey, is stated by himself, and is an object of curiosity: "I had learned," he says, "from wise men, that the holy Peter received great power of binding and loosing; that he carried the keys of the heavenly kingdom; and therefore I thought it particularly advantageous to beg his patronage*." He died in 1035. The reigns of his two successors, did not exceed an interval of six years, when the throne was left vacant for a prince of the Saxon line†.

Though under the Danish dynasty, as far as can be collected from our chronicles, nothing seems to have been directly done for the promotion of letters; the re-establishment of tranquillity and order, must be deemed a signal benefit, which had in every way improved the condition of the country. This was the state of the country, when Edward, afterwards surnamed the confessor, the youngest son of the late Ethelred by his second marriage with the Norman Princess Emma, was called to fill the throne of his ancestors. He had lived abroad, chiefly, if not entirely, amongst his relations, in the Norman court, where he contracted many intimacies, and learned to admire their manners. "He was almost become a Frenchman." Hence the modes, language, and habits of the Normans became fashionable. This preference, and more than this, the honours and

* Ep. Canut. ap. Spelman Conc. p. 535.

† See the authors as before quoted.

BOOK IV. ecclesiastical dignities, which were conferred on many Normans, gave offence. Edward was a weak prince, "little qualified," says the historian*, "to discharge the duties of a throne;" but he was religious, just, and beneficent. In Normandy he might have acquired some taste for letters, though the schools of Bea were not opened during his residence in that country; but, unfortunately, attention is seldom given to the education of exiled princes. But opposing factions were softened or reconciled by the mildness of his government; the English and Danes were cemented into one people; and we hear no more of their differences. "During his reign," according to the historian just quoted, "there was no civil tumult which was not soon suppressed; no foreign war: and tranquillity prevailed both at home and abroad." But he proceeds to mention how splendid, contrasted with those of their master, were the characters of many nobles of the land, whom he names. He remarks, that the persuasive eloquence of Earl Godwin, in his native tongue, was admirable; and he represents his daughter Editha, whom the king had married, as a princess, "in whose breast all the liberal arts might be said to reside; but who was little qualified for worldly pursuits. In her presence, her learning might excite your wonder; while you looked in vain for modesty of mind, and corporeal beauty." The abbot of Croyland, who knew Editha is more indulgent†: "She was exquisitely beautiful," he says, "well versed in letters, pecu-

* Williel. Malmesb. in Edw. l. II, c. 13. † Ingulf. Hist.

liarly modest, humble, and, differing from the stern manners of her father and brothers, gentle, sincere, honourable, and to no one ever gave offence. It was said of her,

Sicut spina rosam, genuit Godwinus Editham.

When I visited my father, then residing at court, I often saw her. She would stop me, as I came from school, and ask me questions; then, turning with singular pleasure from the heavy rules of grammar to some logical levity, in which art she excelled, she would entangle me in some sophism: but this was sure to procure me some pieces of money, with which she directed me to go to the king's buttery, and procure some refreshment."

Whatever may be thought of this family, the general standard of intellectual proficiency during the twenty-five years of Edward's reign, does not appear to have been raised any higher; for the same author*, in speaking of Stigand—who, when the Norman Robert had been compelled to withdraw, entered the chair of Canterbury—hesitates not to say, that he made a public traffic of bishoprics and abbeys through error, rather than any criminal intention, "as the illiterate man—and such, at that time, were many and almost all the prelates of the land—saw no guilt in making the most of every commodity, ecclesiastical as well as civil."

* De Gest. Pont. Angl. l. 1.

BOOK IV.

The Norman Conquest.

After the discomfiture and death, in this same year, 1066, of Harold, the son of Earl Godwin, in whose veins was a stream of pure English blood, the Norman Duke William, to whom, from a predilection for his race, Edward, it seems, had promised the throne of England, was saluted king. The Malmesbury historian thus speaks of this event, and thus describes the characters of the two people*. "Fatal was that day---of the battle of Hastings---to Englishmen: it marked the fall of our dear country, and subjected it to new masters." He then states, what had been the primitive habits of their Saxon ancestors, and what the happy change, in all orders of men, after their conversion to the christian faith. "But," he continues, "in process of time, and before this Norman invasion, the pursuits of letters and the practices of piety, had long been relinquished. Satisfied with the slightest acquirements, churchmen could barely mutter the words of the service, whilst he, who knew any thing of grammar, was considered as a prodigy. Cloathed elegantly, and observing no distinction of meats, the monks ridiculed the rules of their institutes. The nobility, addicted to every species of luxury, frequented not the church, as became christians, but, at home and in the indecencies of their bed-chambers, barely listened to the service, as it was rapidly repeated. The lower orders were a prey to the exactions of their masters; and, the weaker sex experienced the most opprobrious usage. Drinking was the delight of all; nor for this did the day suffice. But, though the waste

* In Willielm. I. l. III.

of money was great, their houses were low and contemptible; in this widely differing from the Franks and Normans, who lived sparingly, in edifices of a spacious and grand construction. The vices attendant on ebriety enervated the mind, whence, in the fatal conflict of Hastings, without any military skill, with a rash and precipitate fury, they engaged the enemy, and became an easy conquest, surrendering themselves and country to slavery. The Normans—for of them I must speak—were, and continue to be, most elegantly dressed; and, without any excess, they affect a peculiar delicacy in their food. Habituated to the use of arms, and hardly knowing how to live out of war, they fight with ardour; but failing of success, they have recourse to stratagem, and understand well the efficacy of gold. Their edifices and mode of living have been mentioned. They are jealous of their equals; and strive to surpass their superiors; they are faithful to their masters, but desert them on the slightest offence. They weigh the chances of treachery, and sell their opinions to the highest bidder. Yet they are the most kind-hearted of men; treat strangers with the same respect as their fellow-citizens, and do not decline marriage with their inferiors. Their arrival in this country gave a new life to religion, which was nearly extinct. In all parts of the country, in towns, villages, hamlets, churches and monasteries in a new style of building, were seen to rise: the kingdom, as if regenerated, began to flourish, while every man of wealth seemed to think the day lost, that some work of munificence did not illustrate."

Conformably with this representation, the liberal historian of our poetry observes*: "Such great institutions of persons

* Dissert. II.

BOOK IV. dedicated to religious and literary leisure, while they diffused an air of civility, and softened the manners of the people in their respective circles, must have afforded powerful invitations to studious pursuits, and have consequently added no small degree of stability to the interests of learning."

The above picture is strongly marked both in the light of praise and the shade of reproof. But it may be deemed just. The author lived very near to the times; and as, by his own declaration, he was related to both people, his statement cannot well be called in question. Was the Norman conquest then a fortunate event? If we believe the historian, it was; not that it was followed by any improvement in happiness, in morals, or in learning, during the life of the conqueror; for he himself dwells on the acts of stern oppression which the English were made to feel. He plainly says: "if you except the first days of his reign, he did little deserving of praise;" but the conquest was fortunate by introducing a race of men—superior, at the time, to the native inhabitants, and the Danish settlers—whose arts and whose manners could not fail to induce a gradual improvement; and whose constitutional character, more animated and energetic, was well adapted, as the event proved, to propagate a spirit of more active exertion.

Impelled by the natural severity of his temper, and provoked by the attempts which were made to shake off his galling yoke, William exhibited the ferocity of a tyrant; and men of all ranks experienced his resentment. As the rapacity of his followers was in unison with the merciless severity of his character, every Englishman was soon deprived of his

honours and estates; and it became a fixed maxim, from which there were few deviations, that Normans alone should be trusted with power, ecclesiastical, civil, and military. It seemed his wish, when the best blood of the realm was reduced to distress and penury, that the English name should become a term of reproach. He directed, says the Abbot of Croyland*, that the elements of grammar should be taught in the French tongue; and that the English manner of writing should be suppressed. The pleadings of the courts of judicature were in French: the deeds were often drawn in the same language: the laws were composed in that idiom: no other tongue was used at court: it became the language of all fashionable company; and the English themselves, it is said, ashamed of their own country, affected to excel in that foreign dialect.

The event shewed the impotency of all attempts to exterminate a language, once radically fixed, while the mass of the people who speak it, are permitted to live. The Saxons gave currency to their tongue; but it was by the extinction or extermination of the British natives. When we look to the various hordes of the Gothic invaders, we may recollect, that they adopted the speech of the conquered countries, or insensibly permitted their own to be merged in their idiom. Even the ancestors of these Normans, in the more refined tones of Neustria, lost the rough and guttural accents of their northern descent. The difference then of circumstances

* Ingulf. Hist.

BOOK IV. is palpable. An ignorant and savage nation, intent alone on military glory or on pillage, pays no attention to language, arts, or manners; while the same nation, as was verified in the Normans, in process of time, becoming possessed of higher acquirements, is not satisfied, unless with a change of language, it can force all its habits on the acceptance of a prostrate people. The conduct of the Romans bore a resemblance to this; but they were actuated by more enlarged views; and the means which they used, were more generous and politic.

The contumelious wrongs and unrelenting oppression, which I have described, must necessarily have deadened the exertions of a people, who, though as often conquered as invaded, had not lost all sense of national dignity—and have rendered them little solicitous to acquire fame, much less to emulate the pursuits of their oppressors. Four years had hardly elapsed, when, among the able men whom the conqueror introduced*, Lanfranc was called to the see of Canterbury. Our historians repeat his praises; and no one, surely, at that time was more worthy of the primacy. He declined it; however, seriously observing, that he was a stranger to the language of the country, and that its manners were barbarous. These manners he might hope to civilize; but his objection, founded on his ignorance of the vernacular

* See Warton Dissert. II. "Many of the Norman prelates," says he, "preferred by the conqueror, were polite scholars." He afterwards mentions the names of some poets, of whose compositions, in imitation of Leland, he is disposed to think favourably.

idiom of the people, was strong, though it be well-known, how little it was heeded in the appointment of ecclesiastical superiors. Much is said of the piety of Lanfranc, of the confidence which was reposed in him by the king, and of his zealous endeavours to reform the loose manners of the monks; but nothing, I believe, is mentioned of any attempt to establish schools or to revive the love of letters. Yet the celebrated master of Bea, who had done so much for Normandy, and whose literary fame was commensurate with Europe—could not certainly have neglected the interests of England, when so much power and influence were placed in his hands. He was well aware of the relation which knowledge bears to virtue, and ignorance to vice; and therefore, as we are told that, by incessant labours, "he roused the rude minds of many to good, rubbed away the rust of viciousness, extirpated the seeds of evil, and planted those of virtue," we must conclude that, among the various means which were thus applied, he exhibited no want of attention to intellectual pursuits. Speaking of the monks of his own time, the historian of Malmesbury says: "Their minds are still formed on the model of Lanfranc; his memory is dear to them; a warm devotion to God, to strangers a pleasing affability, still remain; nor shall ages see extinguished what in him was a benevolence of heart, comprising the human race, and felt by each one that approached him*."

The primate survived his master not quite a year, dying in

* De Gest. Pontif. l. i. De Gest. Reg. l. iii. Ingulf. Hist.

BOOK IV. 1088, after he placed the crown on the head of William Rufus, a prince whose education he had superintended; and on whom he had conferred the honour of knighthood agreeably to the manners of the times*. "The province of Kent," concludes the historian, "as long as time shall last, will not cease to speak of the labours of Lanfranc; nor the Latin world to admire in his disciples the extent of his doctrine." His works are chiefly theological.

Ingulph, Abbot of Croyland.

One of these admirers, was his contemporary and his friend, Ingulph, the Abbot of Croyland, who has been mentioned as noticed by queen Editha, and who has left an interesting history of that celebrated abbey, interspersed with a variety of general incidents. He was an Englishman; received his first education at Westminster, and completed it at Oxford, in which latter place, he says, he made great proficiency in the study of Aristotle, "while he clothed himself down to the heel in the *first* and *second* rhetoric of Tully." He became acquainted with the conqueror in a visit which the latter made to the court of king Edward; gained his good-will, and returned with him into Normandy, where he continued to enjoy his favour, and to exercise great power. He joined a band of pilgrims, and travelled to Jerusalem; and he has related the incidents of the journey. On his return he became a monk in a monastery of Normandy, from which he was transferred by king William in 1076, to the government of Croyland.

* *Quem nutrierat et militem fecerat:* Will. Malmesb. l. IV.

His history is written in a very homely style; whence we may collect what had been the character of his Ciceronian education; but the attention of the reader is interested by the simple and ingenuous air of his narrative. It furnishes all the information which the most inquisitive would wish to possess, concerning Croyland, its buildings, its various fortunes, its extensive possessions and immunities, its treasures, its monks, its occupations, and its statutes. No distinct period seems to have been allotted to study; but an account is, on one occasion, given of a present of forty large original volumes of divers doctors to the common library, and of more than a hundred smaller copies of books on various subjects. Sometimes also the names are mentioned of men, said to have been "deeply versed in every branch of literature." The story of the Abbot Turketul is particularly interesting. He had exercised the high office of chancellor, that is, of principal minister of state, under more than one of our princes, when in the reign of Edred, about the year 948, he obtained permission to retire, and became at once Abbot of Croyland. Many distinguished persons, who had been long attached to him, followed him in his retreat; of whom some became monks, and others, fearing the rigours of the cloister, but unwilling to lose the society of their friend, had his leave to reside within the precincts of the convent. They entered into priests orders, or officiated in some inferior clerical function, wearing an uniform dress, but "bound to no duty of the *monastic profession**, saving that of continence and obedience."

---

* *Præter continentiam et obedientiam nihil aliud* religionis *noverant.* Ignorant, I presume, of the accepted meaning of the word *religio* (the monastic pro-

BOOK IV.

Proceeding with the administration of Turketul, we read what he did for the security of the possessions and privileges of Croyland, when he directed his views to the improvement of its internal government, and enacted a new code of statutes. These seem fraught with much wisdom, by which a just subordination and correct discipline, in the practice of affability, cheerfulness, modesty, gentleness, and forbearance, might be maintained; every hour have its allotted occupation; and the monks be led on, from a life of severe duties, to an increasing repose from labour, as age required repose, and merit claimed indulgence. As his convent was rich, we next see him attentive that the indigent should be relieved, the unhappy solaced, and succour provided for all in distress. In the neighbourhood such children were educated as were designed for the monastic life. These, the abbot visited once every day, watching, with parental solicitude, their progress in their several tasks; rewarding the diligent with such little presents (which a servant carried with him), as children love; and animating all by exhortation, or, when necessary, compelling them by chastisement, to the discharge of their duties. In these, and various other occupations, particularly in attending to the calls of five venerable sages, who had witnessed the varied fortunes of Croyland, passed the last days of Turketul.

---

fession), Mr. Hume thus disingenuously translates the passages: "Those very monks, we are told by Ingulph (they were not monks, says Ingulph), had no idea of any *moral or religious merit*, except chastity and obedience." Hist. of Eng. in Edgar.

Oh! tu severi religio loci,
Quocunque gaudes nomine, non leve
Nativa nam certe fluenta
Numen habet, veteresque sylvas;

Præsentiorem et conspicimus Deum
Per invias rupes, fera per juga,
Clivosque præruptos, sonantes
Inter aquas, nemorumque noctem;

Quam si, etc.*

They are the well-known lines written by a feeling poet, when visiting the awful mansions of the Grande Chartreuse, in the neighbourhood of Grenoble. And, I own, my mind could sympathize with his, as I viewed in thought the retirement of Croyland, and in thought conversed with its inhabitants; whilst a sigh was breathed from my bosom, that such asylums—to which the sinner, the man of contemplation, or, like Turketul, the statesman, tired in the ways of ambition, might retire—were now no more.

* Thou genius of this awful place,
—Whate'er, unknown to me, thy name—
Thee 'mid thy native streams I trace,
Thee do these ancient woods proclaim!

Ah! more I feel thy influence round,
'Mid pathless rocks, and mountains rude,
And all yon deep opake of wood,
And falling waters' solemn sound,

Than if enshrin'd aloft I saw thee stand, &c.

BOOK IV.

The fields, which then smiled with luxuriant crops*, had, to a certain extent, been reclaimed from stagnant and noisome waters, and its walls were raised on a treacherous foundation†; but within dwelt content, and the virtues which are associated with an innocent and active life; a love of such studies as the rudeness of the times prescribed; and a hospitable board ever spread before the traveller and the stranger. The neighbouring parishes—as in these days of vaunted opulence—felt not the pressure of the idly indigent, insolently claiming relief, and obtaining it; for, at the doors of Croyland, thus giving back what the pious and the charitable had bestowed, the hungry were fed; drink was given to the thirsty; the houseless were sheltered; and the naked were clothed.

Anselm.

Another Italian, to whom we, and France, and the western church were indebted, was Anselm, educated also at Bea, for some years under Lanfranc, and afterwards promoted to the place of abbot. It is related, that he imbibed the whole spirit of his master; assisted him in his lectures; and, after his departure to Caen, took upon himself the important

---

* Fecit etiam in annis siccitatis culturam in suis paludibus, et habuit fructum centesimum de omni semine seminato: fuitque cultura de Tedwarthar omnium fertilissima; ditatumque est monasterium supra modum, tantaque copia frugum fuit, quod totam circumjacentem regionem de frugibus relevabat, confluentibus etiam innumeris turbis egenorum villa maxima fiebat.

† Omnia de lignis levigatis facta sunt (quia molem lapideam fundamentum debile ferre non suffecit) plumbaque cooperta.

charge of instruction, by which means the various elements of science, and the fame of the Norman school, were more widely diffused *. Besides possessing a more comprehensive stock of general knowledge, as it was then taught, and refined by a taste which had not, in those ages, fallen to the lot of any, the mind of Anselm was gifted with a keenness and depth of penetration, which led him triumphantly through the labyrinths of metaphysical research. While teaching at Bea, and while prior of the monastery, he wrote six treatises, most of which are on dogmatical subjects. In these, he reasons on the existence of the Supreme Being and his attributes, endeavouring to shew, that the light of intellect alone can lead man to the knowledge of those sublime truths. The natural powers of his mind were thus at once developed, acute, penetrating, subtle; and, by constancy of exercise, they afterwards acquired additional strength, and an expert versatility in controversial hostilities. But it has been lamented, that this mode of philosophising on the great points of religious belief, which was repressed by an humble diffidence in the mind of Anselm, took a bolder range in others; generated endless strifes; and led directly to that scholasticism, which soon took possession of the schools. Anselm wrote on the *Fall of Satan*, on *Truth*, on *Original Sin*, on *the Reason why God created Man*, on the *Liberty of the Will*, and the *Consistency of Freedom with the Divine Prescience*. All these subjects evince the particular speculations to which the public attention began to be turned, and excite a hope, that when a relish for what is abstruse shall

* Eadmer in vita Anselm.

BOOK IV. have seized the minds of many, a higher and more generally useful species of intellectual exertion will prevail.

The writers of the *Literary History of France*, a work of which I am not possessed, thus speak of the change which was introduced into the philosophy of the age by the labours of Lanfranc and Anselm. Logic, say they, agreeably to its primitive acceptation, was the art of just and solid reasoning, by which truth might be most readily discovered: but for this, certain ideas, arising from the knowledge of things, were previously necessary; and the men of this age were little solicitous for their acquirement. Their dialectic was made up of words and rules, the application of which was not understood. To remedy this evil, St. Anselm composed his treatise, entitled the *Grammarian*, which is in truth a treatise on the art of reasoning. In this performance he undertakes to point out the two general objects of all our ideas, namely, substance and quality. The definition helped to simplify future researches; and to this the lectures of Lanfranc had led the way.

But, they add, that more was done in the line of metaphysics. When Anselm began to lecture, the name was hardly known: but he developed its principles with so much felicity, and himself made such proficiency in the study, that he acquired the fame of being the first metaphysician, since the days of St. Austin. His works, entitled *Monologion* and *Prosologion*, from which even modern philosophers have derived no small portion of light, form an excellent Treatise of Natural Theology on the Divine Being and the Trinity of Persons. From him the inquirers after truth learned to exalt their minds

above the barbarous sophisms of the schools; to make use of the natural light that was within them; and to contemplate the eternal essence in itself.

Before these two great men, as they elsewhere observe, opened their schools, the Latin, spoken in France, was rude and barbarous; their philosophy was not worthy of the name; and their theology was lifeles and void of precision. When they began to speak and write, a wonderful change ensued; and later ages have not disdained to make them their models. Lanfranc, taught the use of those arms, in the defence of christian belief, which theology supplies: his pupil Anselm undertook the solution of questions, which, before his time, were involved in darkness; and shewing the conformity of his decisions with the authority of the scriptures, he taught his disciples, by a new method of argumentation, to reconcile reason with faith; while he directed philosophy to pursue the path which has been described*.

From these studies—which had a tendency to produce a distaste for the common business of life, and to absorb the mind in reveries—Anselm, about the year 1078, was called to the government of the abbey. His reluctance to accept the place of honour was, we may believe, sincere; and, after the lapse of fifteen years, he still more reluctantly consented to accept the primacy of England. He knew the rapacious and untractable character of the young king, William; saw

* These passages are taken from Tiraboschi Storia della Lit. Ital. t. III, l. IV.

the manifold abuses which he practised and encouraged; and was not unconscious of the severe zeal for the well-being of the church, with which his own bosom glowed. It belongs not to me to trace the series of misunderstandings which ensued between him and the prince, which may be considered as the cause which principally averted his attention from the literary concerns of England, and which—joined to the opinion that all those of the Norman school entertained of the prerogative of Rome—drew him from his See to consult the occupant of the papal chair. It was during this visit, in an interval which he was permitted to pass in the beloved retirement of a convent, that he returned to his former speculations, and completed a work, which he had before begun, on the abstruse question, *Why God was made man?* It was also during the same visit, that he assisted at the council of Bari, in 1098; where he was publicly desired by the Pontiff Urban to deliver his opinion, which he did in a manner so full and satisfactory—in reply to the Greek delegates, on the point of the procession of the Holy Ghost—that a final decision was instantly pronounced *. The Greeks had in no previous controversy encountered a champion, who was more competent to follow them through the mazes of metaphysical research, and to defeat them with their own weapons.

The primate returned after the death of William, and the accession of Henry to the throne; but new contests arose on other points of ecclesiastical privilege; and in these the re-

* Eadm. Hist. Nov. II. et in vita Ansel.

maining years of the life of Anselm were consumed. At no time, however, had he desisted from his usual employments of study and writing; and when he died, his works amounted to many volumes, on dogmatical, ascetic, and other subjects *.

Eadmer: his Credulity, and that of the Age.

Eadmer, a monk, his pupil, his friend, and the companion of his journies, has left us, in two distinct works †, the history of his master's life; of his contests with the English kings; and of the persecutions which he endured according to the prevailing maxims of the times in the cause of justice. Some critics have spoken highly of the last of these works. They say that it may vie in elegance with the best of our old writers: its style is equable, and not deficient in dignity. If we look to his contemporaries, to those who went before him, or even to those who came after him, we are disgusted with their gross and squalid compilations. Eadmer is not beneath the monk of Malmesbury in manner, and in other respects he is far his superior ‡.

I am not disposed to controvert this favourable judgment; for when a writer of history narrates facts in a luminous and well digested series, with a due attention to chronological accuracy, we are in posession of all that is most valuable, and may be contented to overlook the absence of harmonious periods or the ornaments of polished diction. But what ex-

* Dupin, Vol. VIII. † De vita St. Anselm. Historia Novorum.

‡ Selden Præf. in Eadm.

cites disgust in Eadmer and in others, is the puerile credulity which they manifest in every page. But still as this was their temper and the temper of the times, the loss of such writers would have been the loss of some important links in the history of man, or a spacious blank in the descriptive picture of his errors. Here we are led to ask—Had the learned lectures of Lanfranc and of Anselm in no degree diminished the gross darkness of the times? Or, what is more, had their own minds—which could penetrate the secret recesses of mystery in points of the most intricate subtlety—acquired no knowledge of the laws of nature, or of the ordinary dispensations of Providence, in the government of the world? So it seems: for had Anselm thought more justly than his pupil, the latter, in recording the events of his life, to many of which he was an eye-witness, could not have seen prodigies in the most ordinary occurrences, and have emblazoned every act of virtue as an effort of miraculous power! He would have learned to correct this extravagance; and to repress his prurient propensity to the marvellous. On one occasion, when the primate was on a journey, a hare, pursued by dogs, took refuge between his horse's legs. The dogs stopt. "Go thy way," said he to the timid sufferer, moved by pity: "the hare went off; but the dogs were withheld from the chace by the potency of his words." On another occasion, he saw a boy holding a bird by a string, which he let loose, or drew back, as his wanton fancy directed. "I wish thou wert at liberty," said Anselm. "Instantly his wish was accomplished; and the boy, on seeing the bird escape, burst into tears." The luxuriant credulity of Eadmer, had not been corrected by his master. Where virtue was, there must have been in his mind an accompaniment of prodi-

gies. No effort of virtue was too trifling for the display of miracles, or, in other words, for the suspension of nature's laws.

Had the credulity of the age, which is synonymous with ignorance, rested here, it might have been thought, at least, innocent; but it led to pernicious and often fatal, excesses. Such were the proofs or trials by *ordeal*, in which, when sufficient evidence of innocence or of guilt did not appear, recourse was had to what they called the judgment of God. These trials were various, chiefly by fire or water; and the histories of the times abound with the most extraordinary incidents. Religion was employed to consecrate the attendant ceremonies; and men of real piety refused not to be present at the humiliating scene. It is related, that at Florence, during this century, a monk, named Peter, in order to prove that the bishop of the city had been guilty of Simony, passed barefooted and unhurt, over a path of ten feet, strewed with burning coals, and between two flaming piles. The bishop, who was thus convicted, was deposed by the Roman Pontiff, and Peter was afterwards promoted to the See of Albano. Not many years after this, when Antioch was taken by the christians, and the identity of the lance was disputed, which had pierced the side of our Saviour, the monk, who had recently made the discovery, by the suggestion of a vision, offered to undergo the ordeal of fire, to establish the truth of what he said. His offer was accepted, and he passed through the terrible proof. He died, however, within a few days; and the fact of the supposed discovery became problematical.

BOOK IV. It is sometimes said, that there was more sincerity and truth in the intercourse of life amongst a people thus rude and illiterate. I suspect it to be otherwise. That virtue which is of the most genuine sort will, I believe, be found where the mind is most enlarged, and reason most cultivated.

The Crusades. We may feel some surprise, that such ecclesiastics as those whom we have lately contemplated, and who, with their brethren, uniformly opposed the trials by *battle*, did not discover the insufficiency, not to say the folly, even the wickedness, of the *ordeal* proofs. But can inconsistency cause surprise? And what judgment shall we form of the *crusades*, which were more extravagant in their origin, more contagious in their progress, more destructive in their consequences, than all the follies which had hitherto infuriated or depressed the human race, and which, towards the close of this century, took forcible possession of the minds of the western world. As elsewhere * I shall mention as much of this subject as may be deemed connected with the cause of letters, I shall here only observe, as another instance of human weakness, that the scheme originated in the cultivated mind of Gerbert, in the first year of his pontificate; was nourished by Hildebrand; and carried into execution by the activity of Urban II., and the eloquence of Peter the Hermit. Without attending to the express declarations of the instigator of this holy warfare, writers on this subject have amused their sagacity in the supposed discovery of various and discordant motives. Gerbert writes

* See App. 1.

an epistle *, in the name of the *church of Jerusalem*, to the *church universal throughout the world*, in which—after describing her present dejection, and her former glory, when Christ chose her land for the place of his habitation, of his death, and of his burial—she exhorts the christian soldier to come to her relief, if not in arms, at least by the subsidiary aid of advice and of treasure.—As the enemy had advanced, Gregory formed the bolder design of carrying war into the heart of his dominions; and endeavoured to rouse the western princes by arguments of self-interest, of religion, and the sacred thirst of Christian glory, to co-operate with him. Such reasonings were congenial with the feelings of the man: he even offered to march with them: "but a design of this magnitude," as he prudently observed, "demands wise advice and powerful succour †."—Urban resumed the scheme, and, in the council of Clermont, by all the arguments before suggested, which were powerfully addressed to the passions, easily accomplished what his predecessors had begun, and the Hermit had impressed on every mind.—The first army marched in 1096, and in 1099 Jerusalem was taken. BOOK IV.

I believe that the views of Gregory were politically just; and had the strong impulse of enthusiastic devotion not been introduced, without which, however, nothing could have been done—and a regular army, with which the throne of Byzantium might have safely co-operated, been conducted by expert generals into the East, it is probable that the Saracenic power

* Bib. P. 65. t. x. ep. XXVIII. † L. I. Epp. ep. XVIII. l. II. ep. XXXI.

BOOK IV. would have experienced an effectual check, and the fall of many kingdoms been averted. But the excitement of enthusiasm was necessary to the effect which was to be produced; for without it, what man, after cool deliberation, would have devoted his person and his property to so remote and hazardous an enterprise? And when the mental fever was kindled, a train of consequences, similar to what were experienced, would necessarily ensue, and which Europe had long reason to deplore.

But was the state of letters at all affected by the first, or by the ensuing crusades? I think that it was affected, but to its detriment. That it suffered at home will hardly be controverted, when we consider the dissipation which it occasioned in the minds of all men, civil and ecclesiastical; and the new temper that was generated, by which all sedentary occupations were suspended, and a mark of reproach fixed upon every undertaking, which did not tend to, or was not connected with the peculiar military mania of the times. Schools and convents felt the general contagion; if a few employed the sober remonstrances of wisdom, they were unheeded or despised. At the call of their prince Duke Robert, the pupils of Bec deserted their masters; and no eloquence gained hearers but that of the Hermit, or of popular declaimers on the same topic. That this was the case is sufficiently attested by the histories of the times.

As to external benefits, I believe there were none; or if any, did they compensate for the depopulation of countries; the waste of treasure; the obscuration of the moral principle with respect to correct views of right and wrong; and the intro-

duction of many foreign vices? It is true, that among the Greeks there was much to learn, and much might have been derived from the Saracens themselves. But in our scottish vanity, we affected to despise the former, because their bodily strength was inferior to our own, and they knew less of the art of war; and to have sought instruction from a Saracen, or to have taken it when offered, might fairly have been deemed an humiliating concession to the enemy, if not a base dereliction of the christian faith. Our ignorance, besides, of the languages of the countries through which we passed, was an insurmountable obstacle to every acquirement; unless where the observation of the eye may be supposed to have sufficed. Hence it has been remarked, that a higher degree of splendour and parade, which was borrowed from the riches and magnificence of the eastern cities, was introduced into the courts and ceremonies of the European princes.

If it be still insisted that some benefits, in domestic, civil, or scientific knowledge, were necessarily communicated to Europe, either by the expeditions themselves, or, at least, owing to our long abode in the East: I ask what those benefits were? or how it happened, that the literary and intellectual aspect of Europe exhibited no striking change till other causes, wholly unconnected with the crusades, were brought into action? I believe then, that these expeditions were utterly sterile with respect to the arts, to learning, and to every moral advantage, and that they neither retarded the progress of the invading enemy, nor, for a single day, the fate of the eastern empire.

The Twelfth Century.

Yet we have seen, that by the agency of schools, and the celebrity of particular individuals, some impulse had been

BOOK IV. given to the human faculties; and when this has taken place, the effect will not at once cease. Nor will I deny, that when the mental energies had been brought into action by the crusades, even literary pursuits, though wholly unconnected with them, might in some few cases, obtain a fairer chance of engaging attention, than if the general stagnation of thought, which we have so long beheld, had continued to prevail. In the *twelfth century* new religious institutes were formed; schools were enlarged and established; and the study of jurisprudence, and of new modes of philosophising, were pursued with incredible avidity. That the cause of real literature received any direct benefit from these incidental occurrences I do not pretend to assert; but their tendency was obviously beneficial. They kept the intellectual faculties in action, and when, though the time may be remote, some fortunate event, or some combination of circumstances shall give birth to other subjects of inquiry, a disposition to embrace them, and an ability to pursue them will be found. I am not aware, that any men of transcendent talents will now present themselves to our consideration; and if such there should be, I shall not bring them forward unless they are, in some degree connected with the general state of letters.

The question of *investitures*, between the church and the state, continued to agitate both, and to occupy the minds of the different champions. The exercise of talents arose from the perpetuation of controversies. No spiritual jurisdiction was meant to be conveyed by the ceremony of *investing*; but merely to secure, by an act of homage to the prince, the fealty of the newly-elected bishops and abbots before they entered on the possession of the cities, castles, or lands annexed to

their sees, or monasteries. The claims of the prince were called *regalia*. But here lay the difficulty. The possession was granted by the crosier and the ring, the obvious emblems of ecclesiastical power. "And what matters it," observes Ives, the learned bishop of Chartres, and a pupil of Lanfranc, "whether the concession be made by the hand, by a sign of the head, by words, or by the crosier? By these nothing spiritual is intended; but only to consent to the election, or to grant to the elected the possession of such lands or external effects, which the beneficence of princes had bestowed on churches*." But when the passions were enlisted on one side, the arguments of cool reasoners were little heeded on the other; and the dispute lasted till a somewhat later period, when by the easy device of substituting the *sceptre* for the *ring* and the *crosier*, the mutual rights of the church and state were deemed to be preserved inviolate.

Increased Intercourse with Rome: its effects.

During this controversy our Anselm, and in other countries other bishops, made journeys to Rome, which, though an evil—as far as they helped to create or to perpetuate too servile a dependence on the Roman court—were, in other points of view, productive of much good. They opened to the travellers whatever was worthy of observation in the countries through which they passed; and as these travellers were, generally, men of some talents, they would naturally make comparisons and derive materials for improvement. The Latin language, which they all spoke, would admit them to a

* Ivon. ep. 65. ap. Baron. an. 1099.

BOOK IV. free intercourse with men of education in the courts, the cities, and the monasteries, which lay in their way; in the last of which the doors were ever open to strangers. At Rome, I need not remark how plentiful would be the objects of curiosity, the means of information, and the sources of improvement. It may, therefore, I think, be presumed, that, from these journeys, every traveller returned with some additions to his stock of knowledge; though, he might at the same time imbibe a more partial attachment to the Roman prerogative, than he possessed when he left home.

Other calls, in the present state of ecclesiastical politics, drew churchmen to the Roman tribunal, or to the shrine of Peter; and among these churchmen, the most conspicuous were the metropolitans. A badge of honour, called the *pallium*—anciently worn by the emperors—had by the concession of the pontiffs become a part of the archiepiscopal attire. At first it denoted dignity, and was conferred on those whose services seemed most to deserve the distinctive mark; but, in process of time, it acquired a higher distinction, and was thought to signify the plenitude or consummation of the pontifical power, without which the archbishops were not permitted to exercise the duties of their station. As it was of consequence, that an intercourse should be maintained between the head and the principal members of the church—the metropolitans, on their accession to their sees, were directed to make a journey to Rome; there to petition for the *pallium*; to take it—when the petition was granted, and the stipulated fees were paid—from the shrine of St. Peter, on which it was placed; and, at the delivery, to swear obedience and fealty to the pontiff. From this

journey; though often laborious and expensive, an exemption was not easily obtained. This was, as I recollect, the case with Lanfranc, who, having pleaded his remote situation, was answered by Hildebrand, then archdeacon of the Roman church, that, had the favour been granted to any prelate of his station, it should not have been refused to him. He then added these remarkable words: "We think it necessary, that you should come to Rome, that we may, with more effect, discuss various subjects, and take our resolutions *."

Early in this century—after the death of Anselm, the primacy was conferred on the Bishop of Rochester. The age and the infirmities of this prelate rendered him incapable of performing the journey—a dispensation from personal attendance was accordingly granted; but not without great difficulty; and a legate, with all the solemnity of office, was deputed with the *pallium*. In the presence of a vast multitude, observes the historian †, who was an eye-witness of the scene, the legate entered Canterbury, having obtained the king's permission, bearing in a silver box the Roman *pallium*. The archbishop, attended by his suffragans, and pontifically attired, walked barefooted to meet him. The venerable ornament was laid upon the altar, from which it was taken by the primate, having first made a profession of fidelity and obedience to the pope. The *pallium* was presented to the kisses of the assembly; was then placed over the shoulders of the primate; and he was enthroned.

* Ap. Baron. an. 1076. † Eadm. l. v. Novor.

BOOK IV. This incident suggests another remark: that if, by these journeys to Rome, from the remotest quarters, and through many intermediate kingdoms, an intercourse was maintained ---without which, nations would, in a great measure, have remained insulated, and unchanged in their habits---the progress of Roman legates through the states of Christendom, their residence in the various courts, and their visits to the churches, may be considered as another source of civilization and improvement, though sometimes of injury and oppression. The legates were selected for their engaging manners; their endowments commanded respect; their attendants were numerous; and the splendour of ceremonial, which accompanied all their movements, displayed the polished taste, and superior refinement of the court, from which they came. For the maintenance of this station, the ecclesiastical order was indeed often exposed to many burdens; but still such legations were not without their use. They were not without benefit to literature. The legates themselves, or the confidential secretaries in their train, were men of learning; and the learning of Rome, at all times marked by a characteristic superiority, could not fail to engage attention, and occasionally to kindle a laudable emulation.

Should it be objected to me, that I can discover advantages from this intercourse with Rome and with Romans, and none from the crusades, which promoted more travelling and a much more extensive communication---I reply, that the spirit, the views, the motives, joined to the characters of the men engaged, in both cases, were widely different; and that therefore, the results could not be the same. On one side, we behold persons of education, of sober and regular conduct

and habits, coolly contemplating, as they proceeded or as they sojourned, the manners, the arts, the customs of nations: on the other, we gaze upon a promiscuous multitude of all ages, orders, and professions, rushing forward with the impetuosity of a torrent, and solely intent on plunder, sensual gratification, or providing the means of subsistence; on destroying the supposed enemy, or, at the best, on accomplishing their vows. Here the disparity is obvious, and it is by no means in favour of the crusades.

The intercourse with Rome—though it might produce the salutary effects which have been mentioned—prepared the way, by facilitating the introduction of abuses, to a distant, but fortunate revolution, of which, at the time, there could be no suspicion, and of which the reader may not himself be aware. The abuses, to which I allude, were of the most diversified kind; and branched out into a thousand modes of extortion and oppression; till they swelled into one accumulated stream of grievances, of which the best men of the age, and the sincere friends of order and of Rome, did not cease to complain. Among these were Bernard of Clairvaux and our countryman John of Salisbury. The grievances, however, remained; and the wealth of Christendom continued to flow into the Roman treasury, or to nourish the greedy dependents on that court—under the general admission, that its prerogative over the persons and purses of churchmen was without controul—when a general discontent gave rise to inquiry; inquiry to discussion; discussion to discovery. Men went back to the early ages; the writings of those ages were ex-

amined; a spirit of criticism aided the research; and light gradually opened on the mind. I am well aware that it was long before this point was reached; but the first step was now taken, though marked by little more than the feeble murmur of discontent.

In tracing the progress of the human mind through darkness into light, no stage of the way, however slight, should be neglected; and therefore, if, in the intercourse with Rome, I could discover the germ of some improvement to less polished nations that subject ought not to be overlooked, when, by engendering grievances, it generated complaints, which brought on inquiries; by which not only certain spurious documents and unfounded claims were discovered, but which terminated in the revival of letters.

Other effects of these grievances, and of the relaxed and worldly manners of the higher orders of churchmen, were the peculiar heresies of the age. Persons possessed of little knowledge—such as the Catharists or Puritans, the Petrobrussians, the Henricians, and the Waldenses or Poor Men of Lyons—undertook, in the ardour of their zeal, to reform mankind, and to restore christianity to what, they conceived to be its primitive purity. They were opposed, as might be expected; but such opposition, where enthusiasm, not the address of able innovators, was to be combated, demanded not the exercise of vigorous talents, nor the display of learned investigation. It only kept the mind in action.

New Monastic Orders.

Another incentive to this action was the establishment, in

the present century, of new monastic orders. Hitherto, that of St. Benedict had, I believe, exclusively prevailed; in all countries, its houses were numerous; and schools, as has been mentioned, were opened to them; which were the resort of able professors willing to teach, and of scholars eager to learn. The fame of sanctity and of learning, to which the depraved lives and the gross ignorance of the secular clerks gave a powerful relief, attracted general regard; while the pious and the opulent poured in their treasures, and transformed their humble abodes into magnificent edifices which they surrounded with extensive domains. That effect then ensued which a knowledge of human nature might readily have anticipated; the monks degenerated from their primitive severity of conduct and simplicity of manners; and immorality and disorder took place of piety and discipline. This was visibly the case in the celebrated house of Clugni in Burgundy, which had long been distinguished for the exemplary virtues of its inhabitants; and it was the falling off of this and of other houses gave rise, at this time, to the order of Citeaux—from the place named Cistertian—and to other institutions. Of all these new establishments the design was, to restore the pristine regularity of the monastic life. In this they were successful; and by this means the newly-erected orders, acquired the general favour, and became the objects of that lavish liberality, which had both enriched and corrupted the houses of St. Benedict*.

* See on these subjects the writers of Ecclesiastical History.

BOOK IV.

The energy, which was imparted by these means to the minds of many, was far from inconsiderable. Not only austerity of manners, with exercises of an exalted devotion, and a marked abstractedness from the world were necessary; but, in the state of rivalry, in which they stood with the Benedictine fraternities, a superiority was to be shown in every undertaking, whether of religious duties or of scientific pursuits. The monks of Citeaux, however, in what was called their golden age, led an ascetic life, in silence, prayer, and manual labour, regardless of literary application; whilst those of Premontré, who were nearly coeval in their foundation, combined with those exercises an assiduous attention to literary cultivation.

St. Bernard.

I must not quit Citeaux without some mention of the celebrated St. Bernard, who was without exception, the most eminent character of the age. The influence which he possessed throughout Europe seemed unbounded; his dictates were received as a law; and kings and princes listened with respectful obedience to his admonitions, as to the voice of heaven. He was born, towards the close of the last century, near Dijon; and received his education in the neighbouring schools. His talents, which were great, were joined to an uncommon fluency of natural elocution. His progress in learning and the liberal arts exceeded the usual attainments of the age. But his mind was cast in a peculiar mould. Sequestered habits, ascetic practices, devotional ardour, and the contemplation of celestial objects, could alone occupy his thoughts; and he became absorbed in these, till the world and all its concerns excited only his disgust; and he resolved

entirely to abandon the busy scene of existence. Citeaux had been recently founded. Its austerities, its seclusion, its ascetic exercises, its lowly condition, and even its poverty had charms for him; but he would not go alone, and it was his wish, that others should be partakers of the happiness which he was about to enjoy. He had six brothers, many relations, and many friends, some of whom were established in the world; and all of whom had a fair prospect before them of fortune and distinction. To draw such men as these to the cells of Citeaux, would be a noble triumph. Bernard made the attempt and succeeded. So much, indeed, was his persuasive energy an object of alarm, that mothers, says the writer of his life, hid their children, wives their husbands, friends their friends; that they might not come within its dangerous sphere. In his twenty-second year, followed by five of his brothers and other companions, in number thirty, Bernard entered the humble retirement of Citeaux, of which he might be considered as the second founder.

Were I now to relate what his life was, in its abstraction from all sensible objects, its absorption in divine musings, its watchings, its incessant prayer, its labour of the hands—it would seem the fiction of romance, and unworthy of belief. And yet, of what is not the mind capable, when it has been early disciplined; strongly impressed; no affections, as in the young Bernard, nurtured by indulgence into passions; and the spirit universally triumphant? His thoughts, unassociated with earthly objects, unless as these were connected with the supreme being, became incapable of distraction. "I meditated," said he, "on the word of God, and the fields

BOOK IV.

and the forests taught me its secret meaning: the oaks and beeches were my masters." With the help of these interpreters, when their aid was necessary, he read the scriptures, going over them without a comment; "for their own words," he observed, "explain their meaning best; and in those words may be found the real force of the truths which they convey."

After two years, this extraordinary youth was translated, with the jurisdiction of an abbot, to a new establishment at Clairvaux, a barren and neglected spot, the retreat of thieves, and, from its state of desolation, called the vale of *wormwood*. This community endured great distresses, from the ungratefulness of the soil, if minds such as theirs could be afflicted by penury: "Men," says the historian, "who, as it were but yesterday, abounded in wealth and the luxuries of life, now suffered, without a murmur, fatigue, hunger, thirst, and cold, not anxious for themselves, but anxious only so to labour, that their successors might not perish through want." He adds: "As you descended the hill towards the convent, its simple and lowly buildings seemed at once to say, that they were the dwelling of God. The vale, indeed, was peopled; but each inhabitant was employed in his allotted portion of labour, and with the exception of the sounds which this might produce, the deep silence of the night prevailed, through the day, only broken, at stated intervals, by songs of gratitude addressed to their heavenly Father. Among these the abbot was also seen to labour with the rest: at other times, filled with sublime contemplations, his mind ruminated on celestial truths; or else, issuing from his cell, in a language which seemed more than human, he imparted to his pupils those truths

the depth of which they could not fathom, or inculcated lessons of moral excellence, which were too exalted for their attainment. His person exhibited great elegance of form, and his countenance was marked by the lineaments of beauty; but both were soon impaired by the austerity of his life, and the insalubrious and debilitating rigor of his abstinence.

His contemporaries * write of him with the enthusiasm, which the character of his life was calculated to excite; and though I know not, that the ascetic exercises which he inculcated were at all auxiliary to the cause of learning, I can still view them with satisfaction. They prove that apathy or inaction is not a state which the mind of man can long endure; that it will force itself into exercise; and that a proper direction of its powers is all that is wanting to effect the accomplishment of what is great and good. Of this tendency to action, we shall soon behold other proofs. And whilst Europe, in its crusading frenzy, was busily engaged in the wildest schemes of warfare, who can look into the retreats of Clairvaux, and not enjoy their peaceful serenity? In the estimation of many, a turn more consistent with sound reason and public utility, might have been given to the exertions which we have beheld. For had they taken the course of letters, no common bounds would have limited their progress; but the times, and the eccentricities to which they gave rise, must be considered; and, besides, was it nothing to have converted the vale of wormwood into a region of abundance, and to have clothed with vines the surrounding hills?

* See various extracts in all modern writers on ecclesiastical matters, particularly in the accurate Fleury, t. xiv.

BOOK IV. Men addicted to literary pursuits do not easily descend to the laborious exercises of the field. As I proceed in this inquiry, I am, sometimes almost induced to think, that if fewer monastic establishments had been formed, or, if being formed, had study, rather than manual labour, divided the hours of the day, the provinces of our western world would still have beheld the surface, disgraced by more dreary wastes, more unhealthy marshes, or more impenetrable forests.

The fame of the exemplary virtues and high attainments of the abbot of Clairvaux was not long confined within its walls; and they who may be curious to trace the incidents of his life, which closed in the year 1153, will find, that what I said of the part which he acted, during that period, in all the great concerns of Europe, was far within the bounds of truth. We may believe, that he was drawn from his convent with reluctance; but such was the ardour of his mind, when once it could be turned to business; so great was his earnestness in every art in which he engaged; so persuasive was his speech; and so irresistible the weight of his advice, the authority of his name, and when irritated, the means of his indignation, that there was no measure so arduous which he would not undertake, and no undertaking, as far as he was concerned, which he did not accomplish. We see him in France, Italy, and Germany, swaying the decisions of synods by his voice, maintaining, through a severe contest of many years, the rightful election of Innocent II. and ultimately subduing all opposition; reconciling the differences of princes, and restoring peace to contending factions; upholding the integrity of the Christian faith, and oppugning error; preaching the second crusade, when the most reluctant were compelled to espouse

the fatal measure, and the command of the armies was offered to his direction. And in all this interval, as often as circumstances would permit, he anxiously hastened back to Clairvaux, where he practised the lessons of his youth, exhibited the humble virtues of a recluse, and prepared his mind for new undertakings.

The works which he has left behind him, are various as they are numerous, and comprised under the principal heads of *Sermons*, *Epistles*, and *Moral Treatises*. These may be read with pleasure; for his style, far above the standard of the age, is pure, animated, and concise; his thoughts, sometimes sublime, often full of dignity, and always fitted to the subject; while the subjects themselves comprise all the diversities which religious and moral considerations, the duties of the monastic life, and the numberless concerns of the christian commonwealth could supply. His Letters, which are no less than four hundred and forty-four, record many historical facts, interspersed with sage reflections and apposite advice. But his sermons display the most extraordinary fertility of mind, as on the two first chapters only of the Book of *Canticles*, and the first verse of the third, he was able to deliver to his monks, seemingly with the most easy flow of thought, eighty-six discourses! The antithesis—which perhaps is no proof of taste—is the figure which he introduces with most frequency. In addressing the highest characters, princes or pontiffs, he writes with the utmost freedom and unreserve, censures every abuse, and spares no deviation from the line of rectitude, and established order. This he particularly evinced in his treatise *De Consideratione*, addressed to Eugenius III. who had been his pupil, in which he states, without disguise, what are the duties

BOOK IV.

of the first pastor; blames the many irregular proceedings of the Roman court; and urges the necessity of a reform. The tract, which he styles his Apology, is written with great acuteness, and is an amusing performance. It was intended as a justification of himself and others for what they were accused of having uttered against the Benedictine monks, particularly those of Clugni. He denies the general charge; but lest it should be inferred, from the praise which he freely bestows on their institute and their manifold good-deeds, that he was really blind to their irregularities, he furnishes a minute description of their luxurious tables, their costly modes of attire, and their sumptuous equipages, which the Roman satirist, in his severest mood, might have perused with satisfaction.—His theology is perspicuous, addressed rather to the heart than to the head; and he treats of doctrines after the manner of the ancients, in a plain and simple exposition, filled indeed two much with allegories, but pervaded by that devotional fervor which the French call *onction*. He has acquired the appellation of the *mellifluous* doctor. The facility with which, in almost every period, he introduces the words of Scripture, is really admirable, and their application is seldom forced, or unappropriate. From the candid ingenuousness of his mind, he was an enemy to all sophistry and deceit. He therefore, ever strenuously opposed the scholastic refinements which prevailed at this time; by which the simplicity of the christian faith was perplexed, and of which the celebrated Peter Abeillard now professed himself the master.

Scholasticism introduced.

Before I speak of Abeillard, whose name is essentially connected with letters, I must observe, that the new method of philosophising in religion, to which I allude, had grown out

of the more sober rules, which were established by the great masters of the Bea school, in their theological lectures. It was the dialectic art, rendered complicated and mysterious by metaphysical terms and subtleties, applied, as a test of truth, to every subject, and particularly to those of religion. But it is evident, that religion could not be benefited by such an auxiliary; and what service was it likely to render to philosophy? The object of these doctors was not so much to elucidate truth, or to promote its interests, as to perplex by abstruse and elaborate distinctions; and, on every question, to evince an imperturbable obstinacy. No attention was paid to the realities of nature, nor to the operations of the human mind; but the wildest fictions, and the most palpable sophisms were embodied in a nomenclature of distinctions, which seemed calculated for the defence of error rather than the support of truth. It had, however, a powerful tendency to exercise the faculties of the mind, the extraordinary display of which often attracted admiration, particularly of numbers who flocked to the schools, and crowned the triumphs of the masters with their applause. The feats of the Grecian sophists, which had been exhibited in Rome and in Athens, were repeated, in the twelfth century, on the benches of our christian schools, and with the nearly similar effect, of engendering difficulties, of multiplying errors, and of obscuring truth.

To the solution of theological questions the philosophy of Aristotle had, before this time, been applied, imperfect translations of certain portions of which were in the hands of the western teachers. It now came into much more

BOOK IV. general vogue; and acquired higher estimation. Some men of curious inquiry resorted to the Arabian schools, particularly those of Spain, in which—having learned the language, or, at least, understood, in what esteem the writings of the Athenian sage were held by them—they brought back other translations, which were, it is said, less faithful than those already in their possession. Even their intricacy conferred a value, which the difficulty of their procurement would serve to enhance. From this time, the Peripatetic philosophy gradually obtained the ascendency in the schools, which it maintained through a succession of many years. Its progress, indeed, was occasionally checked by men of sober discernment, who beheld the fatal use to which its perverted precepts were applied. The history of its various fortunes, in the schools of Paris alone, may afford some instructive entertainment*.

Peter Abeillard.

These schools had now acquired considerable celebrity. Here the great dialectician and teacher, William de Champeaux, afterwards Bishop of Chalons, when he had founded the abbey of St. Victor, is believed to have delivered the first lectures in scholastic theology. Abeillard was his pupil. This extraordinary man, extraordinary both from his talents and his misfortunes, is thought by some to have been first a hearer of Roscellin, the founder of the sect of the *Nominal-*

* Launoins de varia fort. Aristot.—See, on the whole subject as connected with scholasticism, Brucker, Hist. Phil. t. III.

ists, by whom he was initiated, as wholly congenial with the character of his mind, in the subtle art of disputation. This art was generally esteemed so fascinating, that they, who excelled in it most, were most admired, and deemed most worthy of ecclesiastical preferment. Abeillard entered the career of honour. "Because," says he of himself*, "I preferred the armour of dialectic warfare to all other modes of philosophy; for it I quitted the military life, choosing rather the conflicts of disputation, than the trophies of real battle. With this view, emulating the Peripatetic fame, and disputing, as I went, I passed through various provinces, wherever I understood that the study was zealously pursued. At length I reached Paris, which was then the great theatre of the art, where William de Champeaux taught; whom I chose for my preceptor." But soon, impelled by a forward petulance and a skill in disputation above his years, to enter the lists with that preceptor, he incurred his displeasure; when he formed the design of opening a school himself, and of giving public lectures. This he did with wonderful applause; first at the royal castle of Melun, and then at Corbeil, which was still nearer to Paris, where he had a more favourable theatre for the display of his talents, and more opportunity of mortifying his opponents. The undisguised jealousy, indeed, of De Champeaux contributed much to the cause of Abeillard, and brought to his lectures a more numerous and more applauding audience. But his health was

*. Hist. calamit. suar.

BOOK IV. unequal to the incessant exertion which his situation required; and he withdrew to his native air of Britanny.

When the sophist had recovered his health, he returned, after an absence of two years; when, finding his old master in the monkish habit, but still delivering his lectures, and that on a more extended plan, he chose, from what motive must be left to conjecture, again to become his hearer. "Again," says he *, "I attended his school, to hear his lecture on the art of rhetoric; but where, in our several contests, I so pressed him on his favourite doctrine of *universals*, that he gave up the point, renounced his former opinion, and hence lost all the fame which he had acquired."

The sophists of the day were wholly occupied about the intricate questions relating to *genus* and *species*, otherwise denominated *universals*. The dispute, indeed, was of high antiquity, taking its rise in the schools of Plato, Zeno, and Aristotle; and it was now revived with uncommon ardour. On one side were the *Realists;* on the other the *Nominalists:* the first affirming, that the primordial or essential forms of things had a *real* existence, independently of intellectual conception; the latter, that they were nothing more than general notions, formed by mental abstraction, and expressed by words. Champeaux was a *Realist;* Abeillard a *Nominalist*. The questions branched out into a variety of nice and impal-

* Hist. calam. suar.

pable distinctions; and the *Universal*, such as human nature in the abstract, was represented, in their language, as metaphysical, physical, and logical, that is, *ante rem*, *in re*, *post rem*.

The school of Champeaux was almost deserted after his discomfiture, and the reputation of his rival had a proportional rise. We then read of the success of Abeillard, though still opposed; of his return to Melun; and of his finally opening a school on the mount of St. Genevieve, where, within the precincts of the enemy's camp, and surrounded by his pupils, he waged incessant war, and was daily engaged, as he pompously describes it, in the most furious contests, for Champeaux had rallied his forces, and returned to the attack. At this critical period Abeillard, on some concerns of his parents, was called into Brittany, after which—hearing that his rival was promoted to the See of Chalons for his theological science, which, as he doubted not, the dialectic art had regularly advanced—he resolved to pursue the same path, trusting that it would prove also to him the path to ecclesiastical honours.

We now find him at Laon, attending the theological lectures of the professor Anselm, a man of high fame in sacred science, under whom Champeaux had studied. The fastidious Abeillard, however, thus describes him: "I went," says he *, "to this old man, who had acquired a name by long practice, not by talents, nor the force of memory. If,

* Hist. calam. suar.

BOOK IV.

uncertain in any question, you asked his opinion, you returned still more perplexed. Possessing an easy flow of words, but words void of sense and argument, he was admirable only to the spectator; when questioned, he was nothing. He seemed to light up a fire; but from it issued only smoke. He was a tree, richly decorated with foliage, when viewed at a distance; but when approached and nearly examined, he was found to bear no fruit." By whatever spirit this judgment was dictated, it was plain, that he who formed it would derive little advantage from such a teacher. Abeillard ceased from attending the lecture, and, with his usual self-confidence, undertook himself to interpret the prophecy of Ezechiel. If the attempt gained the applause of his hearers—who admired, it is said, that his erudition, and the readiness with which he strung together (which was the common mode of commenting) the opinions of the ancient fathers excited the jealous indignation of Anselm, by whose machinations he was soon compelled to leave Laon, and again to repair to Paris.

This theatre of his renown, became the scene of his troubles. At Paris he pursued his theological course; completed his comment on Ezechiel; and launched into the ocean of mystery, applying to every question his favourite philosophy, and the art of sophistic argumentation. "My fame in sacred science," he observes, "was soon not less widely spread, than had been my philosophical renown." And it was at this time, as we are told *, when the radiance of worldly

* Fulco in Ep. in Abeill.

glory did not permit him to see, that he might become the sport of fortune—that Rome, once the mistress of the arts, sent her children to imbibe wisdom from his lips; that no distance of place, no heighth of mountains, no depth of vallies, no road, however beset with difficulties and dangers, kept back the crowd of pupils hastening to his school; and that England, regardless of the sea and its perils, urged forward her youth to enjoy the feast of his instruction. This feast proved also to himself a copious source, as well of pecuniary advantages, as of literary renown. The philosophy of Abeillard, however, had not taught him the knowledge of himself; much less had it impressed him with the principle of temperance and self-controul. He fell in love with the accomplished Heloisa. For her he neglected, what had hitherto been his principal delight, the lectures of the school; and for her, or rather to cover his own fame, he was induced to take a step which, after a tissue of adventures, terminated in the catastrophe, with which every reader is acquainted.

He retired, in an agony of grief and shame, to the convent of St. Dennis; and when Heloisa, at the same time, had taken the veil at Argenteuil, he was earnestly solicited to resume his lectures. He obtained permission from the abbot; and had soon the satisfaction to behold his school more thronged than ever. "As was more becoming my new profession," he says*, "I now turned my mind to sacred study,

* Hist. calam. suar.

BOOK IV. still not utterly neglecting the secular arts, in which I was most versed, and in which many sought instruction from me. Like the great Origen, as history relates, I baited my hook with philosophy, that, when I saw my hearers were allured by its sweetness, I might draw them on to the study of a truer wisdom: In both walks heaven shewed an equal favour to me: my lectures were numerously attended, while those of others daily failed." This again excited jealousy; and as he had written a book, in which he attempted, by dialectic reasonings, to explain the mysterious doctrine of the Trinity, he was cited before a Synod held at Soissons; treated with much harshness; and compelled to throw his volume into the flames.

We may accompany him, as he returned with an afflicted mind to St. Dennis, where his stay was short. He was hated by the monks, as too severe a censor of their irregular lives; and he was otherwise obnoxious. He withdrew, therefore, into the territories of the Count of Champagne; and, after some delay and the adjustment of various difficulties, aided by powerful friends, he procured leave to quit a society, mutually odious, and to choose his own abode. The spot which he selected was a delightful solitude near Nogent, in the diocese of Troyes, well adapted to sooth his perturbed spirits. Here he raised an oratory and a cell, of reeds and mud. We may believe, that his wish now was to live unknown; but it could not be. The love of science, or of wrangling, which had hitherto attracted so many round him, still prevailed. His retirement was broken in upon, and a more spacious place of worship was erected at the expense of his friends, which, from the comfort he began to

enjoy, he dedicated to the divine spirit, and named the *Paraclete.*

The scenes of his former greatness were renewed. From the castles and the towns of the neighbourhood numbers assembled to hear him; they supplied him and themselves with the homely fare, which the country afforded; they built huts round his dwelling—for they would not lose the precious hours of instruction—and made their beds of straw or stubble. Before the end of the first year, six hundred youths attended his lectures, and a new Athens seemed to have risen in the wilderness. But even here envy found means of access to trouble his repose. The name of *Paraclete* gave offence; and his former enemies, who were themselves incapable of hurting him, had the address to rouse the zeal of some eminent men against him, among the foremost of whom stood the celebrated St. Bernard. To his mind, as I remarked, every deviation from the simple language of revealed truth was suspicious; and he particularly abhorred the method of attempting to elucidate it by the subtleties of the dialectic art. On this head, Abeillard, in his lectures and in his writings, was justly obnoxious. He was, therefore, represented as unsound in the faith; and the word alone of Bernard carried conviction with it. Abeillard saw the storm which was gathering around him; whispers, and then loud reports, assailed even his moral character; his friends grew cool, and by degrees deserted him, while those, who were more constant, judged it prudent to dissemble; and soon the *Paraclete* itself, instead of comfort brought only anguish to his mind. "God is my witness," he says at the melancholy moment, "when I heard, that any ecclesiastical meeting was

BOOK IV.

holden, I doubted not, but that it was to condemn me; and I expected the bolt to fall. Often, in despair, I thought of retiring to some country of unbelievers, in order there to seek the repose, which was denied me by my fellow christians." In this distress, he was easily prevailed upon to accept the government of an abbey in Lower Brittany: though the country was savage; its language not intelligible to him; the inhabitants uncivilized; and the monks addicted to vice. He quitted the Paraclete, when in his forty-seventh year; and about the year 1128, repaired to the abbey of St. Gildas, which he soon found to be a station of more vexatious solicitudes than what hitherto he had experienced. At the same time, the nuns of Argenteuil being expelled from their convent, he had it in his power to make over to them, and with them to Heloisa, the lands and buildings of the *Paraclete* *.

I have followed the *memoirs of his sufferings*, written by himself, which contain little more than an account of the visits which, from motives of pure kindness, he made to the Paraclete; but which again set in motion the tongues of the malevolent. In order to silence their censures, he stirred no more from his convent, how painful soever the station was; and this absence, joined to the above *memoirs*, which had fallen into the hands of Heloisa, roused all the feelings of a heart too sensitive, and occasioned the *correspondence* which is come down to us.

* Hist. calam. suar.

My motive for thus particularising many events in the life of Abeillard; was to shew the nature of the philosophy which was now so prevalent: but more especially to prove, from the eagerness with which his lectures were every-where attended, that the minds of many had caught a zeal for learning, which seems almost incredible. I must think, though the statement does not come from the partial pen of Abeillard alone, that there is much exaggeration in the account. But if a part only be true: what shall we say of the multitudes of scholars who rushed to the Paraclete, where the known circumstances of the situation seemed calculated to damp the most ardent curiosity? And what were the lectures which were such a powerful centre of attraction? They were not the sublime rhapsodies, conveyed in the enchanting melody of the Greek tongue, with which Plato captivated the attention of his hearers; nor were they highly-finished orations, nor patriotic harangues, which, while they interested the passions, charmed the ear: but they consisted of debateable questions, on points of theology or of philosophy, as it was called, on which the professor preluded, and in which the pupils sometimes bore a part, as we saw in the contests between Abeillard and de Champeaux. The whole address of sophistry, in distinctions, divisions, and inferences, animated the discussion, and entangled the progress towards truth. I know not, therefore, what could be the charm, which wrought the wonderful effect, unless we may ascribe it to something singularly fascinating, in the manner of the speaker. The style of Abeillard, as we may judge from his writings, was void of all elegance and perspicuity; and the subjects which he discussed, were arid and uninviting. But one general inference may be drawn, that, notwithstanding

BOOK IV.

the inauspicious character of the times, there was, in all countries, an increasing thirst for intellectual improvement; and that, had Abeillard himself possessed a taste, formed on the classical models of antiquity, his influence was so commanding that he might have infused the same taste into the minds of his hearers; and have accelerated, by some centuries, the revival of letters.

It appears, that Abeillard, quitting the turbulent monks of St. Gildas, resumed his lectures on the Mount of St. Genevieve, at Paris, about the year 1137, when our countryman John of Salisbury was among his hearers. "Then," says he*, "that great man taught. At his feet, I imbibed the first rudiments of science, and, as far as my tender mind would then permit, eagerly caught whatever fell from his lips. But he hastily left us." This hasty departure was caused by the troubles by which he was again menaced. He had written other works which, though admired by many, and as it is said, even read with applause in the Roman court, gave offence to the more timorous, and particularly to St. Bernard, when certain propositions, extracted from them, were officiously submitted to his consideration. Abeillard appeared before a synod convened at Sens, where, from what motives cannot be conjectured, declining all defence, and appealing to Rome, he witnessed the condemnation of his errors, and was himself permitted to depart. He published an Apology: "Some things, perhaps," he says, "I may have written, by

* Metalog. l. II. quoted by Brucker, Hist. Phil. l. III.

mistake: which should not have been said; but I call God to witness and to judge my soul, that, in what is imputed to me, I am not chargeable with malice nor with pride." Calling at Clugni on his way to Rome, he was detained by Peter the Venerable, abbot of the convent, by whose benevolent interposition he was reconciled to St. Bernard; and, after two years spent in learned repose and in devotional observances, he closed a life of trouble in 1142, in the sixty-third year of his age.

It is unnecessary, after what has been said, to speak of his works, which are chiefly theological. Heloisa was a more elegant writer, and the powers of her mind were certainly great: but I am not disposed to think, that she possessed so much erudition or was so well acquainted with the Greek and Hebrew languages, and with the sublimer sciences, as her too partial encomiasts and Abeillard have asserted. In the women, or in the men of that period, a scanty portion of learning was more than sufficient, to create a phenomenon.

The following epitaph, which is inscribed on the tomb of Abeillard, may be taken as a sample of the poetry of the age.

Gallorum Socrates, Plato maximus Hisperiarum,
Noster Aristoteles, logicis, quicunque fuerunt,
Aut par aut melior, studiorum cognitus orbi
Princeps, ingenio varius, subtilis et acer,
Omnia vi superans rationis et arte loquendi,
Abeillardus erat; sed tunc magis omnia vincit,
Cum Cluniacensem monachum moresque professus,

BOOK IV.

Ad Christi veram transivit philosophiam,
In qua longævæ bene complens ultima vitæ,
Philosophis quandoque bonis se connumerandum,
Spem dedit, undenas Maio renovante calendas.

It was written by Peter Maurice, whose virtues caused him to be styled the Venerable, and who, with the kindness congenial with his nature, after the death of the ill-fated man, transmitted his body to the Paraclete; attended the obsequies; and delivered an oration in his praise. I will add of him, that to uncommon gentleness of heart he joined an excellent understanding, and a degree of literary accomplishments, not surpassed by any scholar of the age. His letters*, which form the principal part of his works, as far as I have read them, seem written with purity and ease; enlivened by sprightliness; and invigorated by reflection. Impelled by a laudable desire to acquire some knowledge of the Arabian literature and religion, he travelled into Spain, where he spent some time among that extraordinary people, acquired their language, and translated the Koran into Latin†, the errors of which he afterwards undertook to refute. On his arrival in Spain, we are told that he found men of learning from England and other countries, sedulously applying themselves to the study of astrology, in which the Arabians were so renowned. It speaks not much in favour of our christian taste, that, when the Arabian schools, in the various branches of science, had so much to offer, we should have selected that, which has been known invariably to accompany a

* In Bib. P. P. t. XII.

† Ep. l. IV. ep. 17.

drivelling superstition, and an utter ignorance of the laws of nature. But by *astrology*, perhaps, should be understood, as at least, connected with it, *astronomy*, or that study of the heavens, which the disciples of Mahomet had brought with them from the East; and which they continued to cultivate under another sky.

Peter the Lombard.

Among the many scholars of Abeillard, Peter, Bishop of Paris, surnamed Lombard, from the country which gave him birth, acquired the highest distinction in the theological schools of Europe. He has been denominated the *Master of the Sentences*. Appointed to fill the chair of theology, and aware from what he had seen in his master Abeillard, and the followers of the dialectic art, that—if some check were not given to the pruriency of disputation, the religious truths, which were originally so plain and simple, would swell into an unwieldy mass of intricate metaphysics and subtle sophisms—he formed and executed a plan of great erudition, and of more modesty, than some of his predecessors had practised, or than many of his successors were disposed to imitate. His plan was, to state the principal questions then in debate, and on each to collect the opinions of the ancient fathers; by which means he flattered himself, that some stability might be given to the subjects of controversy, and some restraint be imposed upon the wanderings of the imagination. When the *Book of Sentences* appeared, it was received with universal approbation, and its authority soon became so great, in all the schools, that it was deemed inferior to none but to the inspired writings. He who, in the discussion of any question, did not reason from the *Master*, reasoned in vain; and men of the first talents could not employ them,

BOOK IV. it was thought, more worthily than in expounding or illustrating what the *master* had delivered.

But the work, which was the wonder of the twelfth century, has long ceased to be read. It was divided into four books, and these into sections. In the first he treats of the *Trinity*, and the *divine attributes:* in the second, of the *creation* in general, of the *origin of angels*, of the *formation* and *fall of man*, of *grace* and *freewill*, of *original sin* and *actual transgression:* in the third, of the *mystery of the incarnation*, of *faith*, *hope*, and *charity*, of the *gifts of the Spirit*, and the *commandments of God:* and in the fourth, of the *sacraments*, the *resurrection*, the *last judgment*, and *the state of the righteous in heaven*.

We have here, it is plain, a complete body of divinity; and the design of the master, if possible, to fix the varying opinions of the age, was deserving of praise: but were I to present to the reader many questions, which he discusses under their respective heads, he would be sensible, that the learned author was no enemy to metaphysical inquiries; that it was his wish, as it had been that of Abeillard, to make the dialectic art subservient to the purposes of theology; and that, if he was willing to check the further eccentricities of visionary minds, he was not sorry that their fancies and his own had already taken so wide a range. The simplicity of the early teachers in propounding the points of christian belief, and the caution of their followers, when compelled to resist the errors of innovation, would have listened with amazement to the *Master of Sentences*, who, in a wanton licentiousness of intellect, discusses the *generation* of the divine word; inquires whether *two*

persons were, in like manner, capable of being *incarnate;* and whether *Christ*, as man, be a *person* or a *thing?* Whether the will and the action be two different sins? or why, of all the natural faculties, the will alone be susceptible of sin? These are some of the innumerable intricacies into which he enters, and thus having indulged his own propensity to subtle sophistication, he encouraged rather than checked its progress.

The latitude of philosophising in religion, which these men assumed, exposed them to the danger of error, or, at least, to its suspicion. The *master* himself was censured; Gilbert de la Porree, Bishop of Poitiers, still more daring in his researches, was condemned, at the instigation of St. Bernard, in a synod held at Rheims, and Peter also of Poitiers, a disciple of Abeillard, and a professed admirer of the *Master*, directed the principles of his philosophy to the elucidation of all doctrinal points, and made them the test of their truth. Against these metaphysical designs—and he might have included many others—a canon of St. Victor, named Walter, towards the close of the century, composed a work which, with some humour, he entitled *A Treatise against the Four Labyrinths of France* *.

When we look to this country, and to the philosophy that engaged its attention, such was the state of the human mind. And surely, if compared with that of the preceding centuries, the state was much advanced in energy and expansion of

* See, on the history of these men and their writings, the authors of Ecclesiastical history, particularly Dupin, as also Brucker, t. III.

BOOK IV.

powers, however lightly we may think of the subjects which employed the pen, or consumed the midnight oil. In other countries things were in the same condition. In the history of Abeillard we saw how great a concourse of persons his lectures attracted from every civilized land. They took back the science which they had imbibed, and rendered sophistry the ruling taste of Europe. One evil, besides those which I have enumerated, was the consequence of this taste. The secular members of society had, hitherto, from various causes, manifested little inclination to cultivate letters; but now, when a philosophy, abstruse and repulsive in its character, every-where prevailed, and its application was almost exclusively directed to theological studies, the laity might, with reason, deem themselves excluded from the schools, and in this circumstance find a sufficient apology for their ignorance. Latin, moreover, the sole language of science, was no longer generally understood; and the vernacular tongues, from their imperfect phraseology, were unadapted to literary pursuits. What exceptions there were to this general position will be seen hereafter.

It would please me, before I turn my eyes to Britain, to say something of the christian provinces of Spain, which I have hitherto neglected; and which, I fear, I must still neglect. The histories of this country, as far as I have read them, contain little more than the details of battles with the Moors; of internal dissensions among the princes who divided the country; and of outrages and crimes. Learning, however, was possessed by many, but chiefly ecclesiastical, as we collect from the works which were published, and the synods which, in the convulsed state of the country, continued to be convened. I must, therefore, turn to England.

The prince, who began his reign with the century, was Henry I. called *Beauclerc*, a name which augured well to learning, though it seemed to intimate, that to be learned was exclusively the privilege of the clerical order. He was educated with great care by his father*, and passed his early youth at Cambridge, as we are told †, in the study of the liberal arts, which he so thoroughly relished and so deeply imbibed, that, in after-times, "no tumults of war, no agitation of cares, could ever expel them from his illustrious mind." But let us hear what, in the estimation of the historian, were some of the liberal arts which were thus acquired, and thus retained by the British sovereign. "It cannot, however," he adds, "be said of Henry, that he read much in public, *(palam)* or sung but in a low voice." He had, therefore, passed through the *trivium* and *quadrivium*, though no adept, it seems, in reading and singing. Letters, he continues to observe, are a powerful aid to the art of governing, Plato having remarked, that states would then be happy, "were philosophers to reign, or kings to philosophize." With a view, as it might be thought, to a kingdom, he once, in the Conqueror's hearing, ventured to quote the proverb, that, "an illiterate king was a crowned ass."

Notwithstanding this auspicious dawn, when Henry ascended the throne, we hear little of any peculiar encouragement which he gave to letters. But the blame may belong to his biographers, who are sufficiently communicative, unless where

---

* Will. Malmesb. l. v. † Tho. Rudburn: Ang. Sax. t. 1.

BOOK IV. communication is most to be desired. When controversy had ceased between them, the learned Anselm was ready to promote any plans of study; and the names of others are recorded, deserving of no slight praise in the walks of science. When Pope Callixtus, was in France, in the year 1119, and, after a council held at Rheims, waited on the English king, the latter, to soften the pontiff's anger, tried the force of his eloquence, and, what might be more persuasive, that of presents. In this he succeeded; and then, to enliven the scene, and to give to his holiness a specimen of Norman acuteness, he introduced some noble youths to dispute with the cardinals. The young sophists laid their snares with so much art, that the grave prelates were soon entangled; when they fairly owned, that, in their own country, they had not seen such feats of science. What was more, the pontiff departed from the interview, acknowledging, that nothing could be more just than Henry's cause; nothing more eminent than his wisdom; nothing more persuasive than his eloquence. And yet, this Henry usurped the throne of his brother Robert; and now detained him a prisoner in Cardiff Castle! But the historian shrewdly remarks, that eloquence, which is well seasoned with presents, fails not to find its way to the heart.

We may pass, with a sigh, over the turbulent reign of Stephen, to come to that of Henry Plantagenet, who, in 1154, ascended the English throne. He had passed his youth in France, and had not neglected the opportunities of instruction, which that country afforded. His talents were great, and his love of letters conspicuous; and through the whole course of his reign, as often as the cares of government would allow him an interval of recreation, he was fond of passing it in the

society of learned men. Under such a prince, and during a reign of little less than forty years, interrupted, indeed, by wars, but distinguished by a vigorous and vigilant administration, the arts of peace prospered as far as the taste of the times gave encouragement to their progress; the seminaries of learning were protected; teachers abounded, and came over to this from less tranquil countries; the convents furnished an undisturbed retreat to the studious; and, in short, letters were generally patronised and cultivated.

Since the Conquest, Oxford, ill-treated by William, disregarded by his son Rufus, under Beauclerc, again became the object of royal favour, and numbers flocked to her academic groves. The partiality which he shewed to the neighbourhood, as a place of residence, is ascribed, with some plausibility, to his predilection for the muses; and he granted some privileges to the place. In his time, Robert Pulleyn, who had studied in Paris, on his return to England, gave lectures in theology at Oxford. By his exertions the love of science was greatly revived, and the number of students multiplied. He afterwards became a cardinal; and was promoted to the post of chancellor in the Roman church; when he had it in his power more effectually to forward the interests of his native academy. Here we are told, that the study of the civil law, began at this period, under Vacarius, an Italian professor, whilst his contemporary, the celebrated Irnerius, taught at Bologna. Some offence was given on the introduction of what was called *Lombard* jurisprudence; but churchmen soon learned, that, in the unbounded prevalence of Roman politics, this regal science opened the fairest road to preferment. When the dry discussions of the law were superadded to the jejune Oxford.

BOOK IV. scholasticism; which has been described, we cannot be surprised, that all taste for more elegant pursuits should have been more and more extinguished, whilst it was opposed in vain by some few scholars, as Giraldus Cambrensis in this, and Roger Bacon in the following century.

Oxford thus continued, during the reign of Henry II., to follow the line of studies which the fashion of the age universally recommended; and her pupils were second to none in the career of fortune and of fame. Among these was Thomas à Becket, who, having studied at Bologna, disdained not to receive academical honours at Oxford, as honours were then conferred; and, after his promotion to the highest dignities in church and state, he attested, on all occasions, his kind remembrance of the favours which he had received *. Richard *Cœur de Lion* was born at Oxford, and he ever retained a fond predilection for the place of his nativity. But because his father often resided at Woodstock, and sometimes visited the monks at Abingdon, can it be thought, that the love of letters attracted him to the spot, as, on grounds not more substantial, is said of Beauclerc, who was probably impelled by the joys of the chase, to the woods of Cumner and Bagley?

A general inference, however, may be drawn: that the schools of Oxford, though certainly rising into eminence, were, at this time, not remarkable for their lectures, nor their

* See *Hist. Univers. Oxonien.* the author of which labours much to collect a few scattered materials, not always interesting, and generally ill-arranged.

learned men; for we know, as I mentioned in speaking of Abeillard, that many travelled abroad for instruction: and, besides, as the monasteries continued to be the general seminaries, learning was freely communicated from sources less expensive, and often more abundant. What I say of Oxford will, with still more propriety, apply to Cambridge. BOOK IV.

Cambridge.

From the ravages of the Danes, and the insults of the first Normans, this nursery had long lain in obscurity and neglect. It revived about the year 1109, when Henry I. was on the throne; and the circumstances of the event are distinctly marked by contemporary writers. That it was previously in a state approaching to that of total extinction, will appear from the following brief account. Joffred, Abbot of Croyland, intending to rebuild his monastery, which had been lately destroyed by fire, sent master Gislebert, with three other monks, to the manor of Cottenham, near Cambridge. They are said to have been able scholars, skilled in philosophical theorems and other sciences. They went every day to Cambridge; and *hired a barn*, in which they gave public lectures. The barn, in a short time, could not contain the great concourse of scholars; when they were dispersed over different quarters of the town; and brother Odo, an excellent grammarian and satyrist, read grammar, early in the morning, to the boys and younger students, according to Priscian and Remigius his commentator. At one o'clock, brother Terricus, an acute sophist, read Aristotle's logic to the elder class, according to the commentaries of Porphyry and Averroes. At three, brother William gave lectures on Tully's *Rhetoric* and Quintilian's Institutions; while master Gislebert, who, I should have said, was professor of theology, not un-

BOOK IV. derstanding English, but very expert in the Latin and French languages, preached to the people on Sundays and holidays! Why the circumstance of master Gislebert's not being understood by the people, qualified him for a preacher, is not explained. "Thus," concludes the historian, "from this small source, which has swollen into a great river, we now behold the city of God made glad, and all England rendered fruitful, by many teachers and doctors issuing from Cambridge, as from a most holy paradise *." But, a few years after this was written, during the war between king John and his barons, this paradise was entered, and plundered by both parties.

English Historians. Though enough has, perhaps, been said to convey an idea sufficiently distinct of the learning of this and of other countries, I cannot withhold some notice of our English writers, which may not be destitute of interest. Amongst these, in the department of history, the first was Florence of Worcester, whose *Chronicle*, from the beginning of the world to nearly his own death, in 1118, though mostly extracted from Marianus Scotus, is considered as a valuable epitome, and written with much care and judgment. To him, if we except Eadmer, of whom I have spoken, as next in time, but superior in talents, succeeded William, the monk of Malmesbury. Of him little more is known than what himself has incidentally recorded; but his writings, from a certain degree of elegance in the diction, and a great air of truth in the narrative, have

* Continuat. Hist. Ingulph. an. 1109.

obtained the commendations of our ablest critics, and rendered his name dear to the lovers of English story. Robert, Earl of Gloucester, the natural son of Henry I. deemed, in a very restricted sense, the Mecænas of his age, was the protector of this learned monk; and to him he dedicated his two principal works: "which," says Leland *, "as often as I take into my hands, I am compelled to admire the diligence of the man, whose reading had been vast; the felicity of his diction, which could imitate the best originals; and the soundness of his judgment." This may seem rather overstrained; but the learned Henry Saville is not less profuse †: "Among our most ancient writers," he says, "William, for fidelity of narration and maturity of judgment, holds the first place; a man, as the times were, well versed in letters, and who with such diligence and truth, has drawn together the events of so long a period, as to be thought almost alone, among us, to have fulfilled the duties of an historian." And when we read what, in various passages, he says of himself, of his early studies, of his views in writing, his love of truth, and the documents which he possessed, we are led to form a highly favourable opinion of the historian. His general history of England—*De Gestis Regum Anglorum*—is in five books, from the arrival of the Saxons, in 449, to the 26th of Henry I. 1126: his modern history—*Historiæ Novellæ*—in two books, from that year, to 1143: and a history in four books, of the English Church—*De Rebus Gestis Pontificum*

* De Scrip. Brit.

† Ep. ad Eliz. Regin.

BOOK IV. *Anglorum.* On a former occasion * I ventured to say, that a faithful and animated translation of this history would be well received by the public.

William of Newborough, in Latin Neubrigensis, born about the year 1136, was a monk of the abbey of that name in Yorkshire. Among his works, the most valuable is the History of England—*Rerum Anglicarum*—in five books, from the conquest to 1197, the eighth year of king Richard, which is rendered highly valuable by his extensive knowledge of the subject, the veracity of his narration, the felicity of his arrangement, and the purity of his style. He professes to relate what he had himself seen, or drawn from credible sources. I formerly † styled him the most philosophical of the monkish writers; because I saw in him an honest love of truth, a depth of observation, and a boldness of reflection, which could not be stifled even by the cowl. His severe strictures on the fabulous Geoffrey of Monmouth, his contemporary, to whose see of St. Asaph he is said to have aspired, have excited the displeasure of some ancient Britons and of Leland ‡; and Pitts § dares to question his general veracity, because, on some occasions, he too freely patronised the civil measures of the state.

Ralph de Diceto, Dean of St. Paul's, coeval with Henry II.

---

* Pref. to the Hist. of Hen. II.

† Ibid.

‡ De Scrip. Brit.

§ De Ill. Ang. Scrip.

and his sons, wrote two histories, one a mere abridgment—*Abbreviationes Chronicorum*—from 589 to 1197, the other—*Ymagines Historiarum*—from 1149 to 1199, the first of king John. From his rank in the church, and the various business in which he was employed, De Diceto was well qualified to record the transactions, particularly of his own times; and he has done it with accuracy and truth. His facts seem judiciously selected, and they are arranged with perspicuity; and his narrative, without being very correct, or elegant, is manly and ingenuous. He, as well as other writers of the age, seems well acquainted with the characters and great occurrences of other countries, which they very copiously record, and of which they must have obtained their information from the constant intercourse with Rome.

With the last writer, Gervasius, a monk of Christchurch in Canterbury, was contemporary. His works are, a *Chronicle* of English History, from 1122 to the end of the reign of Richard; the *Lives* of the Archbishops of Canterbury, from Augustin to 1205; and a *Treatise* on the Destruction by Fire, and the Re-building, of the Cathedral of Christchurch, of which himself was an eye-witness. In the writings of Gervasius there is much curious information, disposed with great chronological precision. But he dwells with tedious prolixity on the transactions of the church, and particularly the disputes between his monastery and the archbishops. General events are well told, and sometimes with that circumstantial minuteness which evinces an accurate observer. In his description of the rebuilding of Christchurch, there is some interesting matter. The style of Gervasius has no flowers; but it is not vulgar, obscure, or insipid.

BOOK IV.

Roger de Hoveden, or de Howden, was domestic chaplain to Henry II. by whom he was employed in many important concerns, as he was particularly skilled in the canon and civil law. After the death of his master he is said to have retired, and taught in Oxford. His *Annals* of English History, from 731, when Bede's history closes, to 1202, are replete with various matter, and written with an accuracy which is truly surprising. In recording events, he notes not only the years, but the months, the days, and sometimes the hours, when they happened. "If to veracity," says Leland*, "the first quality of the historian, Roger had joined some little of Roman elegance, he would have borne off the palm without a rival." But his style is slovenly, his phraseology often borrowed from the scriptures, and his narration loose, desultory, and immethodical. He is accused of having pirated his materials from the histories of Simeon of Durham, Henry of Huntingdon, and the Abbot of Peterborough, authors of renown in the same age, and the last his contemporary. The charge cannot be true in its full extent, for he relates many things of which himself had been a witness.

Gyraldus Cambrensis, descended from noble ancestors, was born near Tenby in Pembrokeshire. With much self-complacency, and a vanity which has seldom been equalled, he has himself related his first education under his uncle, the bishop of St. David's; his uncommon talents and application

* De Scrip. Brit.

to study: his great fame in the schools of Paris, which he thrice visited; his labours to save the souls of his countrymen, who neglected to pay the tithes of their cheese and wool; his promotion to the archdeaconry of Brecon and to the see of St. David, which the disinclination of Henry II. would not permit him to occupy: his further prosecution of learning at Paris, in law and theology, where his fame transcended the highest praise; his being called to the court of Henry, appointed his chaplain, chosen preceptor to Prince John, and his journey with that youth into Ireland; his progress, after this, through Wales with Baldwin archbishop of Canterbury, where they preached the crusade, whilst his *Latin* sermons drew tears of ecstacy from listening crowds of Welshmen; his better prospects at the accession of Richard, as the last king would not reward those virtues and abilities, which he was compelled to admire; his refusing the bishoprics of Bangor and Landaff, having fixed his heart on that of St. David's; his retiring—as the aspect of public affairs, during the absence of the king, promised no success—to Lincoln, where, during six years, he heard the lectures of William de Monte, in theology, and composed many works; his second election to the see of St. David's, wherein he was again opposed by the primate Hubert, involved in difficulties, forced, at a great expense, to make three journeys to Rome, and at last defeated; finally, his withdrawing from the world, and passing seventeen years in studious privacy*. Such, from his own

* Giral. Camb. de rebus a se gestis ap. Angl. Sacr. t. II.

BOOK IV.

account, was the life of Gyraldus, a man, certainly, of no common endowments, learning, and activity.

In the long catalogue of his works, the principal are, the *Topography of Ireland*, drawn from actual survey; but which, with some interesting information, is crowded with tales of strange events and appearances, and which was publicly read by him, in a recitation of three days, before the inhabitants, the scholars, and the learned professors of Oxford: "a noble and splendid exhibition," he says, "which brought to mind the ancient times of poesy, of which England had hitherto beheld no example." The *Conquest of Ireland*, in two books, which, though too partial to the English name, is a production of great value:—And the *Itinerary of Wales*, containing a description of that country and its inhabitants, of which many parts are highly curious.—The style of Gyraldus is affected and unequal. He delighted in drawing characters, and in reporting the speeches of his heroes, after the manner of the ancients, whom, it is plain, he had read; but he was not aware, how much the clumsy imitation betrayed his want of classical taste.

To this constellation of historians, who graced the annals of our twelfth century, others might be added*. They were monks or churchmen; and though their writings are disfigured by many blemishes, and particularly by credulity and

* See the *Historical Library* by Nicolson; also Leland, and Cave.

a love of the marvellous, I should be sorry to have these defects removed. In tracing the history of man, through the successive changes of rudeness and refinement, the characters of both are equally instructive; and could we suppose a history to have been written at this time without being impressed by the prevailing lineaments of the age, we might view it with astonishment as a phenomenon, but could not consider it as a faithful transcript of men and manners, as they were.

John of Salisbury.

While many, within the cloisters or the precincts of churches, were thus employed, other branches of science were not neglected; and it is with pleasure that I turn to the name of John of Salisbury, a man whose elegance of learning was above the level of his age, and its principal ornament. In a work written by him, entitled *Metalogicon*, he states the progress of his studies, and mentions who were his masters. Early in life he travelled to Paris, which city—when afterward, on a certain occasion, he was compelled to leave his country—he thus describes: "I beheld its abundance of provisions, the sprightliness of its citizens, the composed gravity of the clergy, the splendour and majesty of the churches, with the various occupations of the schools; and in admiration I exclaimed—happy banishment, that is permitted here to find a retreat*!" In this city he heard Abeillard, and after him other able professors, under whose instructions he soon became a great proficient in the popular exercises of disputation.

* Ep. XXIV. inter epp. Sarisb.

BOOK IV. Sensible, however, of the futility of the dialectic art, as it was then practised, he pursued with success, under other masters, the studies of the *quadrivium*. Thus rich in scientific lore he returned to England, where he applied himself to sacred literature: but we again find him in France, visiting his former companions on the Mount of St. Genevieve, whom he describes as inextricably entangled in sophistic pursuits; not having advanced a single step; and of whose progress no hopes could now be entertained. "The advantage of this art," he observes, "as it perfected other acquirements, I was ready to admit: but by itself, it is sterile and void of life." He severely censures some professors, who, vain of their sophistic skill, did not elicit light, but involved the way to truth in greater darkness. The rewards, which the great learning and many virtues of John merited, he soon obtained in abundance, in his own and in other countries. We see him in the English court, consulted by our primates, particularly by Thomas à Becket, whose friend he was in prosperity, and whose companion in exile; and at Rome, we find him highly esteemed by more than one pontiff, and enjoying the familiar intercourse of our countryman Adrian IV.

It was on the occasion of his being sent to Rome by Henry II. to obtain from this Adrian, as it seemed, the grant of Ireland—as an island, by the donation of Constantine, pertaining to the see of Peter—that a conversation was opened between the envoy and the pontiff, of which the former has given an account. "Adrian had lamented his many sufferings, since his elevation to the papal chair, observing, that his seat was beset with thorns; that it would have been well had he never quitted his native soil, and the obscure retreat

of a cloister; and that heaven had placed him between the anvil and the hammer, from which he knew not how he should be rescued. With a frankness which did him honour, he then inquired of his friend, what the world said of him and of the Roman church*. "What I have heard in many countries," replied John of Salisbury, "I will freely tell you. They say, that the church of Rome shews herself not so much the parent of other churches, as their stepmother. Scribes and Pharisees have their seats in her, who lay grievous burdens on the shoulders of men, which themselves will not touch with one of their fingers. They domineer over the clergy, without being an example to the flock: they heap together rich furniture, and load their tables with gold and silver, whilst their hands are kept shut by avarice. The poor rarely find access to them, unless when vanity may introduce them. They raise contributions on the churches, excite litigations, promote disputes between the pastor and the people, deeming the best exercise of religion to consist in the procurement of wealth. With them every thing is venal; and they may be said to imitate the devils, who, when they cease to do mischief, glory in their beneficence. From this charge a small number may be excepted. The pope himself is a burden to Christendom, which is scarcely to be borne. The complaint is, that, while the churches, which the piety of our fathers erected, are in ruins, and their altars neglected, he builds palaces, and exhibits his person, clothed not only in purple, but resplendent with gold. These things and more than these

* Joan. Sarisb. Policrat. l. II. c. 23.

BOOK IV.

the people are heard to utter." "And what is your own opinion?" observed Adrian. "Your question distresses me:" answered the envoy; "for should I oppose my single voice to the public sentiment, I must be deemed false or a flatterer: on the other hand, I am fearful of giving offence. However; as a cardinal of your church—whom he names—has sanctioned the voice of the people, I presume not to contradict him. He maintains that, in the Roman church there is a fund of duplicity and avarice, the real source of all the evils; and this he once declared in a public assembly, in which the late Eugenius presided. But I must myself boldly say, as my conscience dictates, that I nowhere ever beheld ecclesiastics more virtuous and more enemies to avarice, than in this church, of which I can cite living examples, and in whom may be found the austere manners and temperance of Fabricius, joined to the character of christian excellence. As you insist on having my opinion, I will say, that your doctrines should be followed, though all your actions may not be imitated. The world applauds and flatters you; calls you father and master. If you are a father; why do you look for gifts from your children? If a master; why are you not feared and obeyed by your Romans? But you wish, it seems, to preserve this city by your largesses. Was it by such means that Sylvester acquired it? Holy father, you are in an error. What you have freely received, freely give. By oppressing others, you subject yourself to oppression."—Adrian smiled, and having praised the ingenuous freedom of his address, commanded him, when he heard any evil of him, faithfully to report it. Then, to justify the contributions which Rome exacted from the churches, he repeated the apologue of the stomach and the members, these complaining,

that he alone was benefited by their toil, and yet they found by experience, that without him they could not subsist.

The work, which contains this curious dialogue, is entitled *Polycraticon*---or *de nugis curialium et vestigiis philosophorum* —inscribed to Thomas à Becket, who was then chancellor of England. With much accuracy, the author describes the manners of the great, and freely censures their amusements, their want of learning, and their unprofitable waste of time. With equal boldness he speaks of churchmen and of monks, blaming their ambition and their departure from primitive discipline. When I read the *Polycraticon*, some years ago, it seemed to display great erudition, and to be replete with moral notions, sentences, passages of authors, examples, apologues, extracts of history, common places, and citations from the best classical writers. But it appeared to be an ill-digested mass of learning, neither directed by a sound judgment, nor embellished by taste. Notwithstanding its imperfections, it is a valuable monument of literature; and exhibits, in a pleasing manner, the talents, the good sense, and the learning of John of Salisbury.

I have perused many of his letters with delight. His style seemed best adapted to this species of composition; and his correspondents were among the first personages of the age. Their contents, therefore, as detailing important occurrences, are interesting, as their turn of expression is sometimes elegant. How beautiful is this opening of a letter from France to the primate! "Ex quo partes attigi Cismarinas, visus sum mihi sensisse lenioris auræ temperiem, et detume-

BOOK IV.

scentibus procellis tempestatum, cum gaudio miratus sum rerum ubique copiam, quietemque, et lætitiam populorum." The contrast which this style bears with that of his correspondents, particularly with that of the martyred primate—which is harsh, technical, and repulsive, from the unceasing use of scriptural phraseology—excites a warm preference in its favour, and covers many defects. From them, however, and not from the anomalous superiority of John of Salisbury, the just standard of the literary state of the age should be fixed. Toward the close of his life, he was promoted to the See of Chartres, and died in the year 1182.

Peter de Blois.

As a companion to this great man, whose contemporary and friend he was, I might cite Peter of Blois, born, as his surname attests, in France; but who, invited by Henry II. into England, became his secretary, enjoyed high ecclesiastical dignities, and was a conspicuous agent in the transactions of the times. He had studied at Paris, and also at Bologna, the greatest seminary of canon and civil law. Here Thomas à Becket had likewise studied; and hence he appears to have borrowed those maxims, in defence of which he died. As the objects of the two codes were different, they might have been kept separate, and good would have arisen from the separation; but, from the present ideas of men—which were at this time greatly corroborated by the publication of the *Decretum* of Gratian—it was supposed, that the laws, if permitted to coalesce into one system, would give mutual support to each other; and the interests of church and state be equally protected. Hence the professors of the canon and civil law were the same; and he, whose ambition aspired to high preferment, became a civilian and a canonist. This union arose also, in

part, from the almost exclusive possession of learning at that time by men of the ecclesiastical order.

De Blois, speaking of Theobald, the predecessor of Becket in the See of Canterbury, notices the attention which was then given to the study of the laws*. "In the house of my master," he says, "are several learned men, famous for their knowledge of law and politics, who spend the time, between prayers and dinner, in lecturing, disputing, and examining causes. To us all the knotty questions of the kingdom are referred, which are produced in the common hall, and each in his order, having first prepared himself, declares, with all the eloquence and acuteness in his power, but without wrangling, what is wisest and safest to be done. And if heaven suggest the best opinion to the youngest amongst us, we agree to it without envy or detraction."

The subjects treated by De Blois are chiefly theological; but his letters alone are now read, of which the style is not equal to that of John of Salisbury. Like his they abound in quotations from scripture, and from ecclesiastical and profane writers, which was then falsely deemed the test of erudition; but the selection is made without judgment or taste; and where the author professes to speak from himself, forced antitheses and a constant play upon words, render the style perplexed and indefinite, and degrade the most serious disquisitions.

* Ep. VI. inter epp. Pet. Blæs.

BOOK IV. Architecture and other Arts.

Before I close this view—which I have, therefore, the more willingly extended, because, from the general interchange of learning which now every-where prevailed, what is said of its state in England, may be applied, with little variation, to other countries—I will subjoin a few words on that branch of the arts, which now claimed peculiar attention, and in which no common degree of real excellence was attained. With us, the churches of the Saxons were low, unornamented, and dark. By the Normans a better taste was introduced, which soon led to the accomplishment of those noble structures, which we view with pleasure and admiration at this day. In the reign of Henry II. appeared the *modern Gothic*. Cathedral, and other churches were every-where erected, often on the ruins of the ancient edifices; and convents and cloisters rose, which were at once monuments of the piety, the magnificence, and the taste of the age. But the materials, that is, the stone and marble, were often brought from foreign quarries; and the principal artificers were foreigners. We have accurate accounts left us of the manner of raising these edifices, and of the means which were not unfrequently employed to procure supplies.

Gervase, of whom I have lately spoken, the monk of Canterbury, who was an eye-witness, has described the burning of the choir of the cathedral of Christchurch, in that city, in 1174; and its immediate reparation in less than ten years*. He details, through each year, the general progress

* De Combust. et repar. Dorob. Eccles. inter x. Scrip.

of the work, in the preparation of the materials; the raising of the walls and columns, in stone and marble; the turning of the arches; the placing of the windows; and the labours of the sculptors and carvers in completing the admirable plan. The architect was a Frenchman from Sens, who gave and executed the design; but as he was hurt by a fall, in the beginning of the fifth year, an English artist was employed to finish the work.

Earlier than this, and in the same century, the abbey and church of Croyland, which a fire had also destroyed, were rebuilt. The abbot had obtained from the Archbishops of England and their suffragans, an *indulgence*, which dispensed with the third part of all penances, inflicted for sin, to those who should contribute towards the pious undertaking; and it was directed to the king and his people, and to the kings of France and Scotland, and to all other kings and their vassals, rich and poor, in all parts of the christian world. Two monks carried the animating instrument into France and Flanders; two others into Scotland; two into Denmark and Norway; two into Wales, Cornwall, and Ireland; and others into the counties of England. In the space of four years, mountains of marble, says the historian *, were collected round the spot, with immense heaps of gold and silver, of iron, brass, cement, and every necessary material.

On the day, which was fixed for laying the foundation, a

* Continuat. Hist. Ingulph. p. 118.

BOOK IV. great multitude, from the neighbouring districts, met at Croyland, earls, barons, and knights, with their ladies and families, abbots, priors, monks, nuns, clerks, and persons of all ranks. The Abbot Joffred prayed, and shedding tears of joy, laid the corner-stone of the eastern front to the north. The next stone was laid by Richard de Purlos, a knight who was much attached to the abbey; and on it he laid twenty pounds. Then came Geoffrey Ridel, a knight, and his wife Geva, and sister Avicia, the first laying on his stone ten marks; and the ladies, having placed their stones, presented each a stone-cutter to serve, at their expense, for two years. The next corner-stone, to the south of the same front, was laid by the Abbot of Thorney, Joffred's brother, and on it ten pounds. Allan de Croun, a baron, with his lady, and their eldest son and daughter, placed the next four stones, offering on them the title-deeds of the advowsons of four neighbouring churches. The Earl of Leicester, and the Baron de Cantelupe, with his lady, and Allen de Fulbek, and Theodoric de Botheby, with his lady, and Turbrand de Spalding, knights; and then the Earl of Northampton, followed by four knights, and three ladies, placed their respective stones, in the circle of the same front, each, in order, offering on them forty marks, twenty marks, a hundred shillings, the gift of a messuage and two acres of land, the tithes of sheep, a hundred marks, the service of two stone-cutters for four years, and the tithes of Kirkby, and of four other livings. The foundation stones of the north and south walls were then laid by the same two abbots, and the monks of the convent; when the priests of three neighbouring parishes advanced, and laid the bases of the three columns of the north wall, the first attended by a hundred and four men of his parish, offering their labour for one day in every

month; the second with sixty, and the third with forty-two men, making the same offering, till the work should be completed. The three columns of the south wall were then laid by the priest of Grantham, with two hundred and twenty men, offering ten marks; and by the priest of Hockam, with his men, presenting twenty quarters of wheat and as many of malt: and by a third priest, with eighty-four men, offering six marks, two stone-cutters in their own quarry, and the carriage of the stone to Croyland.

Joffred—who had addressed each one as he laid his stone, now having admitted them to the fraternity of the abbey, and, with the benefits of the indulgence, to the participation also of their joint prayers and good works—invited the vast concourse, which amounted to more than five thousand persons, to dinner. The day was passed in hilarity, when the strangers retired, and the great work began. The public apartments of the monks, concludes the historian, were soon completed, while the church, rising to the clouds, looked down on the neighbouring forest, inviting the traveller to approach.

By means like these, as I formerly observed *, those noble structures were raised, which, at this time, notwithstanding the great increase of wealth and skill, nations hardly dare attempt. That superstition, as we conceive it, was the animating principle, which sometimes planned and accomplished

* Hist. of Hen. II. Append. I.

BOOK IV. the designs, may be allowed; but, by what name shall that reforming zeal be called, which, some hundred years afterwards, could raise the massive hammer, and crumble the venerable materials into dust?

The improvements in *civil* architecture were not less progressive. But we must confine them to the palaces, or rather castles, of the nobility; for the buildings of the common people in the towns and country, which were constructed of wood and covered with straw or reeds, continued to be squalid and comfortless. Castles were every-where raised by the kings and barons, for their defence as well as residence, particularly under the first sovereigns of the Norman line. In the reign alone of Stephen, no less than eleven hundred and fifteen were built. The earth was encumbered by their weight; they were every-where seen scowling oppression and defiance; and were often the seats of rapacity and the repositories of plunder. We must not look for elegance in their construction; nor for the display of the finer arts, which decorated the monasteries and churches. They come, therefore, properly under the description of *military* architecture; and from the few which still remain, we may form a just idea of their former strength and dimensions. They were generally covered with lead, like the churches; and the narrow windows were glazed, admitting a scanty and faint light. The great hall alone could cheer the welcome stranger, in which the noble landlord sat, encompassed by his friends and retainers; while the full bowl went round, and the jocund minstrels filled the spacious room with their songs.

The *Gothic* style of building bore a strong resemblance to

the literary taste of the age. There was little unity in the plan, a prodigality of labour in the execution, and a capricious variety in the ornaments. In this style the *Polycraticon* of John of Salisbury was composed; and its counterpart was beheld in the massy edifices of the day. Yet these we still admire. But, would this be the case, did not early associations recommend them to our taste? We turn with disgust from the literary productions of that æra, because, since the revival of a better taste, more perfect models are placed before us; and if Grecian models were more constantly in our view, should we be pleased with their architecture, which is itself, in all its compositions, equally abhorrent from nature's simple forms?

The arts of sculpture, painting, poetry, and music, though the writers of the age are loud in their praise, and they were pursued with eagerness, exhibited little excellence.—The churches, indeed, were crowded with statues; and those motives of veneration which, in other days, gave a peculiar energy to the Grecian artists, might now also be supposed to animate the chisel: but a concurrence of other circumstances was wanting in which these times were deficient. It must, however, be admitted, that the revival of these elegant arts, and the degree of excellence which they attained in the dark ages, after the barbarians of the north had desolated the Roman provinces, are to be ascribed solely to what has been often termed the superstition of the christian converts. A nation of reflective philosophers, or of calculating merchants, would erect no magnificent churches; elaborate no breathing statues; in a word, would not pursue those arts, which, giving a lustre

BOOK IV. to external piety, tend also to civilize man, and to embellish life.

In Rome, where the seeds of taste were preserved by the surviving monuments of ancient grandeur, the successors of Peter, animated by a laudable ambition, expended a large portion of their wealth, in beautifying the city, and in building, repairing, and ornamenting churches. We read * of gold, silver, and jewels profusely lavished; which, unfortunately, operated as a temptation to avarice, and, holding out a rich reward to the invader, drew down on the city a succession of calamities, which it became the solicitude of the next pontiffs to repair.

Painting was also much practised in this and in other countries, not only on the ceilings and walls of churches, but in ornamenting the apartments, furniture, and especially the shields of persons of rank. The subjects, we may presume, were historical. Portrait painting was likewise sometimes pursued.—We may estimate the taste with which such works were executed, from the general standard of the age. Little attention is due to the rapturous strains of contemporary writers. But it is evident, that they well understood how to prepare and combine their colours, as the beautiful *illuminations* of books, which still exist, sufficiently prove.—The art of painting or staining glass, which had been long known on

* See the *Lives* of the Popes in Anastasius and Platina, or the principal passages as stated by Donatus, *Romæ Vet. ac Rec.*

the continent, is thought to have been brought into England in the reign of King John. BOOK IV.

As the time approaches when the modern languages—which had hitherto been employed only in the purposes of domestic intercourse—will be enlisted into the service of the muses, they will demand peculiar attention. Since I have often spoken of the Latin versifiers, I should not again return to them, unless I could lay before the reader some light compositions on wine, or gallantry, or love, which might coincide with the design of the present work. But nothing occurs to my recollection, except the well-known lines of Walter Mapes, the pleasant archdeacon of Oxford, who has been styled the English Anacreon.

Mihi est propositum in tabernâ mori,
Vinum sit appositum morientis ori,
Ut dicant, cum venerint angelorum chori:
"Deus sit propitius huic potatori!"

Poculis accenditur animi lucerna;
Cor imbutum nectare volat ad superna;
Mihi sapit dulcius vinum in tabernâ,
Quam quod aquâ miscuit præsulis pincerna.

Suum cuique proprium dat natura munus,
Ego nunquam potui scribere jejunus:
Me jejunum vincere posset puer unus;
Sitim et jejunium odi tanquam funus.

Tales versus facio quale vinum bibo,
Non possum scribere nisi sumpto cibo;
Nihil valet penitùs quod jejunus scribo,
Nasonem post calices facile præibo.

Mihi nunquam spiritus prophetiæ datur,
Nisi cum fuerit venter bene satur;
Cum in arce cerebri Bacchus dominatur,
In me Phœbus irruit ac miranda fatur.

It was the subject, surely, and not the elegance of expression, that has acquired for Mapes the appellation which I mentioned. He lived early in the twelfth century, during the reign of Henry I. The archdeacon, in his sober moments, was a great lover of antiquities, and is said to have supplied Geoffrey of Monmouth with the Welsh M. S. on the early concerns of Britain, which the latter translated into Latin *.

Nothing was deemed too humble, nor too sterile for the labours of the Latin muse. We have seen the drudgery with which she toiled in history, in describing the symptoms of maladies, and in prescribing remedies; and I may add, that she was sometimes required to exert her genius in versifying grammatical rules. Subjects of a lighter kind, as the birth of a child, the return of Spring, or the pleasures of the chace, came naturally within the province of poetry; but I have nowhere discovered a single spark of genius. Beauty of

* Leland de Scrip. Brit.

style, grandeur of imagery, boldness of conception, and energy of expression will be sought in vain. All is affected, low, laboured, puerile, and insipid. The same, as we shall soon see, will be the character of all productions in the modern tongues. Yet these versifiers had read the Latin poets of a better age; and they seemed to possess a sufficient command of language. Indeed, words are never wanting, when the mind is really animated, or, to use a more appropriate expression, when it is inspired. It then effuses its thoughts in glowing diction and enraptured strains. Of this we have many examples, in the early songs of many barbarous people, in which the genuine seeds of poetry may be found. The persons of whom I am speaking, were, indeed, barbarous; but they were also the dregs of a corrupted stock, in whom all vigour had long been extinguished, and who were contented to write in a language which had lost all its pristine energy. The characteristics of mental strength were principally wanting. Even their religion, as they viewed it, did not elevate; and battles they seemed to contemplate with a cold indifference, as they did the various workings of passion. As I have before me no epithalmium, or song of war, of the chase, or of love, I will present the reader with an epitaph, written by Doniro, whom I before mentioned, on many noble relations of the Countess Matilda, buried in the castle of Carossa, in which he may endeavour to discover whether it possesses either the point of epigram, or the pathos of elegy:

Hos saxo texi cum natis, atque puellis,
——Quos Deus ad caulas paradisi ducat et aulas.——
Non hædis mixti, sinceri sint sed ovilis,
Pascua quo Christi pascant sine fine benigni.

BOOK IV.

It cannot be doubted but that *music* kept pace with its sister art. It occupied, as will be recollected, a place in the *quadrivium*, and was therefore judged deserving of high attention. But this, I presume, was chiefly church music, which was taught in all the schools of convents, where it entered into the general course of instruction. The son of the Emperor Otho had acquired this singing accomplishment, among the canons of Hildesheim. The professors of the art travelled from place to place, and sometimes even came from distant countries, as we read in Bede* of one John, named the singer, who was sent into England from Rome. He first taught in the monastery where he settled, and where, it is said, he instructed the brothers, "while such as had skill in singing resorted from other convents to hear him; and many invited him to teach in other places." Still more to prove the estimation in which music was held, the same author relates †, that a young man, named Cedmon, unable to perform his part at an entertainment, and who retired when it came to his turn to sing, was afterwards wonderfully instructed in the art during his sleep. "Not only did he learn to sing, but to make verses, "full of sweetness, in his own language, on whatever moral subject might be proposed." He sang, says Bede, of the creation of the world, the origin of man, the terrors of future judgment, and the delights of heaven.—Subjects less edifying and less sublime, soon engaged the attention of the singing tribe, and of their auditors.

* Eccles. Hist. b. IV. c. XVIII. † Ibid. c. XXIV.

BOOK V.

STATE OF LEARNING IN THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY.

THIRTEENTH CENTURY: FORMATION OF MODERN LANGUAGES—THE *ROMANE* OR *ROMANCE* LANGUAGE—TROUVEURS AND TROUBADOURS—THE STATE OF OTHER COUNTRIES—ITALY—CONDUCT OF THE ROMAN BISHOPS—UNIVERSITIES—OTHER CRUSADES—AND OTHER MONASTIC INSTITUTIONS—DIVINES AND PHILOSOPHERS; THOMAS AQUINAS—ST. BONAVENTURE—ALBERTUS MAGNUS—ROGER BACON—ROBERT GROSTESTE—THE VARIOUS FORTUNES OF ARISTOTLE—HISTORIANS—ITALIAN—MATTHEW PARIS—POETRY—SAKON AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE—ITS POETRY—LATIN POETRY—INTRODUCTION OF RHYMES—GRAMMAR AND RHETORIC.

BOOK V.

Thirteenth Century: formation of modern Languages.

THE Latin tongue, though greatly debased, had hitherto continued to be the language of the schools, and that in which the learned wrote. But through the course of many centuries, in all the countries where Latin had been spoken by the people, a certain colloquial jargon had been gradually growing out of it, which bore a greater or less resemblance to the parent stock from which it sprung. This vernacular language of Italy and its dependent islands of Spain and of France, may be traced through a series of vitiating changes, to the ancient trunk of

BOOK V. the Latin idiom. In the more northern states, amongst which the language of Rome had never prevailed, a similar process had taken place; and as the different forms of speech, in England, in Germany, in Denmark, and in Sweden, acquired some consistency, their origin might be distinctly traced to the same northern stock *. Wherever the intercourse with other nations had been most ruling and constant, the rising language was marked by a greater prevalence and commixture of foreign words. The language of Spain was thus affected by the Arabian settlers: and that of England, by the irruption of the Normans.

Much has been written on the origin of our modern European languages; but if the existence of a parent stock be admitted—which is an acknowledged fact in every country—the problem does not appear to be encumbered with any difficulties. If we scrutinize the changes which every language undergoes in the lapse only of a single century, as it is operated upon by causes of more or less force or extent, and take into the calculation a much longer period, and the action of more causes, what striking or anomalous appearance is there in the construction of any modern tongue, for which it is not easy to account? After the fall of the western empire, the hosts of invaders who gradually diffused themselves over Europe, by a slow but certain train of causation, extended the influence of their language with that of their power, till the parent speech of the country in which they had established

* See Meusels Leitfaden pass. from which work, would it interest the reader, I could extract much on the progress of the German language.

their dominion, acquiring new idioms and new terminations, with the addition of new words, lost its original form and assumed a new appearance. Or, in those instances in which the Latin had acquired a fixed standard—which seemed perpetuated by the partiality of the learned, the rules of the church-service, and the admired literary productions of past ages, the parental idiom—embalmed, as it were, in honourable death, kept possession of the avenues to science, whilst its derivative dialects, or corrupt progeny were employed in colloquial intercourse and the varied purposes of common life. Thus one remained a dead, the other became a living, language. But the progress to this point of separation, was extremely slow, as the history of Italy would attest.

It may still be observed:—that when languages had advanced so far as to be useful, and to be employed even by the learned in the common traffic of life, they were not immediately converted into vehicles of literary composition. Nor were they requisite for this purpose. The habits of education, and the distinction which was enjoyed by those who understood the Latin tongue, naturally attached the possessors to its use; and its comprehensive vocabulary which had long been applied to the discussion of all subjects, was another reason for its preference. It was, besides, the wish of those who at this period had any pretensions to intellectual superiority to keep as long as possible the key of knowledge in their own hands; and to mete it out in such quantities or at such times as might best accord with their interests or inclinations. Independently of these considerations, the languages themselves—which were as yet expressive of little more than sensible objects—would have been found inade-

BOOK V. quate to designate the various combinations and abstractions of intellect. In the mean time the illiterate, that is, the bulk of men in every country, satisfied with their limited knowledge and with the speech which ministered to their constant wants, cared little for the advantages, which the language of ancient Rome was supposed to possess.

This language, therefore, continued to be the language of science and scientific men; nor was it before the twelfth century, as seems generally agreed, that her eldest daughter, the Italian—having acquired a copious and extensive phraseology—committed her thoughts to writing, and assumed a new character. Still I am inclined to think, though no vestiges of such compositions may remain, that, in the earliest infancy of every language, love has found words, and reduced those words to some measure, more expressive of affection, and more likely to attract the attention of the object it admired.

The Provençal is allowed by some Italian writers* to have been first applied to literary purposes. These productions, however, though in themselves deserving of little praise, form an interesting epoch in the history of letters. They led to more important results. From them men imbibed a taste for reading; or, if they did not read, their ears attested, that, though to be deemed learned the study of Latin was necessary, fame might be acquired, and pleasure received, through the more homely strains of the vernacular tongue.

* See Tiraboschi Storia del. Let. Ital. t. III.

When Chivalry, the fortunate institution of the dark ages, enlisted the efforts of every mind, and the prowess of every arm, in its service, the languages of Europe could be no longer mute.

The *Romane* or *Romance.*

In speaking of those idioms which had acquired most maturity, I have just intimated, that they were the Provençal and the Italian. With respect to the first, I might more properly have said that the language, afterwards known by the name of French, was divided into two dialects, both of which bore the name of *Romane* or *Romance*, because each was formed on the basis of the Roman: that to the north being adulterated by a mixture of Frankish and Norman words; whilst the dialect of the south was vitiated by words transferred from the language of the Ostrogoths, Visigoths, and Alani. The river Loire, not rigidly taken, was their common boundary. The first might be called the *French Romane;* the latter the *Provençal*, because spoken by the subjects of Raimond, Count of Provence, well-known in the armies of the crusaders. The characters of these dialects, however, though owning a common source, were marked by strong lines of difference. The Provençal, from a milder climate, from a more constant intercourse with strangers, and from a closer affinity to the mother tongue, was soft and harmonious: the French more harsh, as retaining more of its northern mixture. But if we number the countries in which these languages were now current, it will be seen, that the *Provençal* was confined within the limits which I assigned it; while the *French Romane*, overflowing its natural boundaries, became familiar to distant nations. It passed with the conqueror into England, where it was previously fashionable.

BOOK V.

The Norman settlers rendered it familiar at Naples and in Sicily, though here it was soon vanquished by the superior fascination of the Italian dialect. The crusaders carried it into the east, and planted it in Syria, in Palestine, in Cyprus, and at Constantinople, where it was at least as permanent, as the conquests which they had made.

Trouveurs and Troubadours.

As the progress of mind in all countries is alike, the first essays in the languages, which I have mentioned, were of the poetical kind; or what more properly might be termed *metrical* composition: the authors of which, from the word *invention*, to the honour of which they aspired, acquired the appellation, in the north of France, of *Trouveurs;* and in the south, of *Troubadours*. There was a close resemblance in the subjects on which they exerted their powers. They were the supposed feats of heroes, in military songs, with tales of love and merriment, all of which were connected with chivalry, and designed to promote its views. It is, however, maintained by modern authors of the late French school, not only that the productions of the *Trouveurs* were the most numerous; but likewise that they shew more felicity of invention, and display greater elegance of diction; whilst they represent those of the *Troubadours*, as deficient in imagery, in interest, and in taste, and producing disgust by a tedious and perpetual monotony. This may be true; but I suspect that the choicest efforts of the more northern muse, if laid before us in their native attire*, would be found not greatly to surpass them in variety of attraction.

* The French editor of the *Fabliaux ou Contes*, Mr. Le Grand, has taken the

It is not, I believe, pretended that any of these authors drew from the original stock of their own minds; though—if it can be proved, that the first subjects were borrowed from the Arabians, or from the east, during the intercourse established by the crusades—the subsequent progress of imitation may be easily explained. But whether borrowed or original, disfigured by a thousand defects of method and style, or polluted by the grossest obscenities, the compositions of the Trouveurs and Troubadours, whether in prose or metre, evince the true character of the dialects, which they employed; the talents of the writers; and the taste of those who recited them or who listened to the recital! They shew more: for works of fancy, as it has been well observed, written in remote ages, are the best, if not the only, documents, illustrative of the manners and customs, that is, the opinions, prejudices, superstitions, tones of conversation, and modes of life, of the times in which they were composed. When they furnish us with so much valuable information, we may readily overlook their defects; and indeed, these very defects are themselves instructive, as far as they mark the progress which had been made. The historian chronicles the great events of life, the revolutions of governments, the characters and deaths of princes, the issue of battles, the altercations of polemics, the

---

liberty to omit, to suppress, to add, and to arrange, as might seem to please a modern reader best; and his English imitator, Mr. Way, in his highly elegant poetical translations, has taken still greater liberties. We have not from either the real effusions of the *Trouveurs*, as is pretended, of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

ravages of war and famine; while the Trouveur or Troubadour, be he poet, fabler, or romancer, explores the diversified scenes of common life, and describes men as they are. If the personages whom he introduces are not real, and the events which he describes never happened; still the manners which he paints are true.

Among these manners, though rather exaggerated beyond their natural dimensions, those of the monks, priests, and physicians, are conspicuously displayed. But, in truth, what was really venerable, never escaped the lash of comic writers; as the malevolence of man is gratified by beholding that lowered by ridicule, which may have checked his own irregularities, or held up before him the glass of truth. However this may have been, in respect to the persons of whom I am speaking, the compositions of the Trouveurs and Troubadours abound with the severest ridicule of such persons and of such things, as, in the temper of the age, were highly estimated and most generally revered. In return, the Trouveurs and Troubadours, while they amused the idle and the profane, failed not to be represented, but with little effect, as lewd and impious libertines.

Notwithstanding this state of opposition, it has been remarked from the evidence of documents, that many members of the monastic orders employed their leisure in writing tales for the minstrels, or in forming collections of such fictitious adventures, as, we may presume, were most admired. Their libraries, in this and in other countries, abounded with works of this kind. They were also, it seems, great encouragers

of the rhyming art, and engaged the minstrels to enliven their festive ceremonies and entertainments by songs and music*.

While, in the south, the Troubadours amused their countrymen, and diffused some taste of letters by reciting or singing their compositions, the Italians caught the flame, adapted their subjects to their own more melodious tongue, and improving both it and them, left their masters far behind. For a time, however, attracted, probably by the charms of these novel productions, they themselves cultivated the Provençal dialect; and we read of many who composed in it, and who, in the courts of their princes, practised the seductive arts of the Troubadours. The Italian tongue, as the historian of its literature candidly owns, not completely formed, even in the thirteenth century, possessed not those elegancies which can allure the poet, to its use: whereas the Provençal, from long practice in rhyme and verse, presented an easy phraseology, and was preferred by the Italians themselves. But this did not last long; competition produced excellence; and the new language of the Italian cities, was soon without a rival in every species of composition†.

In the north, the Trouveurs, whose language had been carried into distant countries, conveyed also their compositions with their language; and thus we were enriched. If,

* See Hist. of Eng. Poet. vol. I. sect 15.

† Tiraboschi, t. IV. p. 393.

BOOK V.

however, it be true, as evidently appears from their popular tales, that they had borrowed much from the old bards of Britain and Armorica, or latterly from the history of Geoffrey of Monmouth, we took back only, as far as these stories went, the fictions of our ancestors, clothed in a new attire. By the side of the glorious achievements of Charlemagne and his heroes, are placed the exploits of Arthur and the Knights of the Round-table, and the incantations of the magician Merlin, are an unrivalled source of wonder*.

Arthur and Charlemagne, observes the historian of our poetry†, are the first and original heroes of romance, in whose chronicles are displayed the characters, the leading subjects, and the fundamental fictions, which have supplied such ample matter to this singular species of composition. The crusades or the Arabians may have supplied other materials: but these tales, diversified sometimes and enlarged, still continued to prevail, and to be the favourite topics. And as Geoffrey's history is the grand repository of the acts of Arthur; so a fabulous history, ascribed to Archbishop Turpin, is the ground-work of all the legends, told of the conquests of Charlemagne and his twelve peers.

---

* I am indebted for the substance of this enquiry to the *Preface* of Le Grand, *Fabliaux ou Contes*, vol. I.; as also to the *Preface* and *notes*, chiefly taken from the same, of G. E. in the English Translation of the *Fabliaux*, by Way. See likewise the *Histoire des Troubadours*, and the Hist. of Eng. Poet. vol. I. dissert. 1.

† Dissert. 1.

In the commencement, and still more, in the progress of the thirteenth century, the intellectual state of man, evidently improved. He read, listened, and was amused. This arose from the use, in all countries, of the modern languages; for though I have dwelt chiefly on two, to which the Italian may be added, it is certain, that no speech was unemployed. The Spanish was now formed; and from their Arabian inmates, whose schools were visited by many learned christians, they would derive subjects, whether scientific or amusing, on which to make trial of their infant powers. The northern dialects were more advanced. They were filiations from one common stock*; amongst which the Teutonic preserved its original predominancy, and might, therefore, at all times, be deemed adequate to the purposes of composition. The fablers visited the courts of Germany; and we read of the encouragement which they experienced. Even the emperors themselves deigned to be their protectors: and as the vernacular tongue, more fixed and more comprehensive than that of the Trouveurs or Troubadours, could represent in its own idiom the stories of their heroes, the tales of their love, or the adventures of their chivalry—we may readily conceive, that if they were not possessed of such themes, the countries of Germany abounded with the same or similar effusions of genius. In England we know what was done†.

To these causes of intellectual improvement must be added,

* See Meusel's Leitfaden, p. 562—7.

† See *Hist. of Eng. Poetry*, Vol. I. Sect. III.

BOOK V. at the same time, the general patronage, which learning every where experienced: for while the cultivation of the modern tongues widely diffused the elements of a new taste, Latin, and the higher studies, which were dependent on it, were not neglected. It might even happen, that these studies would be the more vigorously pursued, from an apprehension, lest these new pretenders to public favour should rob them of the fame which they had hitherto exclusively enjoyed. A fabler, singing or reciting his tale of wonder to ears familiarized with the language in which it was conveyed, while he interested attention, gained applause, and often received a more substantial reward. Had not the Latin language, from the long practice of ages, been devoted to the pursuits of science, and—what gave it a more imposing stability—been consecrated in the service of the church; there was, I think, at this time, some danger, lest it should have given way to an over-bearing influence, and have been lost by disuse.

Italy. Italy—to whose cities, particularly to those of Lombardy, the peace of Constance in 1183 had given liberty—soon experienced, that internal animosities, civil strife, and envious rivalry, rather than general tranquillity and mutual support, had taken place of the open and united warfare, which they so long maintained against the head of the empire. The factions also of the Guelfs and Ghibellines—the Whigs and Tories of the age—and the renewed contests between the empire and the priesthood, still more widely diffused, or more deeply impressed, the evils of discord. The chronicles of the times are filled with the disgusting recital—and this between cities and citizens, the owners of castles, and private

families---of treasons, exiles, homicides, and battles*. Sicily and its dependent states, unceasingly lacerated by new pretenders to the throne, enjoyed but few years of security and repose.

Such, says the historian †, was the condition of Italy from the last years of the twelfth to the close of the thirteenth century; and if letters had ceased to become objects of interest, could it have excited surprise? But yet this was not the case. Among the sovereigns who ruled, many held them in estimation; many had cultivated them in early life, and still deigned among the arduous cares of office, to make them occasional objects of their attention, and to encourage and reward their professors. New schools were opened. These measures were favourable; but the times were yet inauspicious. If the number of students was great, books themselves were scarce; and still more rare were those, who could distinguish between truth and falsehood. And was such power of discrimination to be expected? If a modern sage, intent on some problem, but conscious that his life was in danger, should hear the steps of an approaching assassin at his back, would he, like Archimedes, tranquilly pursue his investigation? Such, at this time, was, in a great measure, the condition of the Italian student; and we may well be surprised that so much, rather than that so little, was accomplished.

Italy was now divided into various provinces, not connected by any system of general union. Some of the states

* See *Rerum Ital. Script.* passim.

† Tiraboschi, t. IV. p. 13.

BOOK V.

were styled republics, whilst others acknowledged the controul of princes, who had claims of ancient right, or freely chosen by the people. Though the emperors, by the late peace, had ceded many of their rights, they still retained the nominal sovereign dominion, which they were ever anxious to exercise. The kingdom of Sicily, on both sides the strait, could number many ample provinces. Enriched by munificent donations, the successors of Peter enjoyed, even as temporal princes, a wide extent of territory. Many, in short, of the cities, which were called *free*, spontaneously submitted to be governed by some one of their own citizens, remarkable for his wealth, his family, or his wisdom. Thus had begun to be formed those divers civic bodies, at once so respectable and powerful, of which we afterwards so frequently read.

In such a state of things, when taste should possess, or fashion should influence, the minds of the great, literature and the arts would be sure to experience an ample share of patronage and protection. Even ambition, or rivalry, the love of fame, or the shame of being outdone, would not cease to operate in the absence of other motives; and, perhaps, the mutual animosities, which I mentioned, might themselves, on many occasions, prove incentives to the furtherance of literary pursuits.

Frederic II. who was educated in Sicily, and in 1218 raised to the imperial throne, was the patron of literature; and was himself extensively learned. His skill in languages, amongst which are reckoned the Italian, German, and French, is much celebrated by contemporary writers; and they tell us

of the schools or academies which he founded; of the works which he procured to be translated from the Greek; and of the intellectual ardour which he every-where endeavoured to excite *. His chancellor, the learned Peter de Vineis, was his fellow-labourer in the meritorious work. The court of Frederic, observes the historian †, whom I willingly follow, appeared as a luminous theatre, on which the learned men met, whom his munificence attracted; whilst under the shade of royal protection, they pursued their various studies, and gave energy to the love of science. Among these were many Troubadours. Frederic afforded encouragement to their amusing arts; and was himself a poet, as he had cultivated the Italian, or rather the Sicilian, dialect, which was the language of his early youth ‡. But the cares of an extended empire, the conflicts which his ambition occasioned, and, more than either, his unceasing controversies with the Roman bishops—by whom he was charged with the commission of every crime—necessarily diverted his mind from literary occupations, and obstructed the completion of many plans, which, in a reign of more than thirty years, might otherwise have been accomplished. After his father's death, Manfredi, the natural son of Frederic, shewed the same taste for learning, and became its ardent protector. On appointing an able professor to the schools of Naples, which had been founded by the late king, he observed, that in his dominions, which were possessed of so many decorations, it was his wish, that the liberal arts

* Brucker, Hist. Phil. t. III. † Tiraboschi, t. IV. p. 17.

‡ Ibid. pass.

BOOK V. should flourish, and that his people, whom nature had endowed with the richest talents, should be provided with all the means of instruction *.

Conduct of the Roman Bishops.

While the literary improvement of Italy thus occupied the attention of its native princes, and whilst by their means, and by the taste which was arising among the independent cities of Lombardy, the Italian language was daily compressed into strength, softened into harmony, or polished into elegance, the same object continued to interest the zeal of the bishops of the Roman See, who were now in possession of wealth, of territory, and of an unbounded influence. Ecclesiastical science, however, was with them the principal concern. Since the year 1198, the papal chair had been occupied by Innocent III. who seems to have inherited the spirit of Hildebrand without diminution or alloy. He had studied first at Rome, then at Bologna, and at Paris; whence he returned profoundly imbued with human science, and rich in ecclesiastical lore. His understanding was acute, his memory retentive; and whether he spoke in the vulgar tongue, or in that of the learned, his eloquence commanded equal attention. He had composed sundry works before his pontificate; after his accession to the chair, his sermons and decretal epistles marked him for one of the most learned prelates whom the Roman See had possessed. His great excellence consisted in legal, that is, canonical knowledge. This appeared in the consistorial meetings which were regularly held, and at which he presided and delivered

* Storia della Letter. Ital. t. IV. p. 33.

his sentiments. We are told that the learned repaired to Rome to hear him; causes, from all quarters, were referred to his tribunal; and his decisions were received as the oracles of truth *.

The effects of such an example must necessarily have been great: but Innocent united it with the influence of rewards, and the obligation of legal ordinances. We read of the privileges which he granted to the schools of Bologna and Paris; and the acts of the fourth Lateran synod exhibit the laws, which he revived or enacted, by which the candidates for the sacred ministry might be provided with proper means of instruction; the dense shades of general ignorance be more effectually dispelled; and new lustre be acquired by the church, of which he was the head †. I have shewn the fair side of Innocent; others may delineate his other qualities and characteristics.

The measures of Innocent, for the promotion of science, were followed by succeeding pontiffs; and it would have been well if these alone had been pursued. But they also took up his views of ambition, which involved them in contests; and thus averting their thoughts from objects which, in our estimation, are alone compatible with the office of first pastors of the church, they often impeded the accomplishment of the best

* Vita Inn. III. Scrip. Rer. Ital. t. III.

† Odor. Raynaldus Contin. Annal. Baron. passim.

BOOK V. concerted plans. Had the Roman bishops—if possessed only of half the wealth which was voluntarily bestowed, of half the territories, and of half the influence which they actually enjoyed—directed these most limited means to the cultivation of science, and to the moral improvement of the christian world, leaving the civil concerns of states in the hands of those to whom they more properly pertained, the people of Europe, and particularly those of Italy, would never have degenerated so far below the standard of their ancestors. Their mental powers, not permitted to become torpid by inaction, would have preserved an honourable distinction; literature and the arts, encouraged by example, and patronised by rewards, would not have experienced the extreme of degradation to which they were reduced; and, in short, the dark ages would not have formed such a long and dreary chasm of ignorance and barbarism in the annals of man.

The station, which those bishops occupied, was singularly propitious, for the accomplishment of the good work which I have mentioned. They resided in the capital of the ancient world, and were heirs of the imposing ascendency which it conferred; they were surrounded by the relics of literature and the monuments of art. To watch over the moral state of man, to provide means of instruction, to correct abuses, to encourage the growth of virtue, in one word, to take care that the christian republic received no injury in all its sacred relations to a future state, were the high duties of their office. The cares which are necessarily inherent in temporal command, and the provisions of family, were placed beyond the boundary of their interests. The patrimonies of Peter were abundant, and having no heirs for whom to provide, they had no

more than an interest for life. Possessed of a general superintendence over all orders of churchmen, and particularly over the monastic institutions, they maintained an intercourse with all countries; and were by this means well apprised of the characters, the conduct, and the endowments of the ministers of religion, whom they could themselves employ, as circumstances might best direct, or recommend to the employment of others.

All this, and more than this, the circumstances of the Roman bishops enabled them to perform. Why then was so little done? Not only was learning neglected, and the darkness in which we have so long walked, covered the European world, while they were possessed of the powerful instruments of counteraction, which I have described; but, I fear, it may be said, that the obscurity became more intense, as their means of dispersing it were rendered more abundant. They were seldom wanting in talents, and in acquirements they were seldom deficient. In truth, the election to the tiara generally fell on the ablest men; and they had at their command, fitted for employment at home, or embassies abroad, ecclesiastics who were inferior in ability only to themselves. I will not be so unequitable as to insinuate, that as pretensions, which are not founded on right, are most readily established in a state of ignorance—the prelates, of whom I am speaking, were, therefore, not anxious that the minds of men should be enlightened by the torch of science. That their prerogative gained much by the ignorance of the times, will be denied only by those who have not read the history of the times; or who know not what is meant by the *donation* of Constantine, and the collection of spurious *decretals*. Still let us not wantonly impute

BOOK V.

disgraceful motives where other motives may be discovered. The pontiffs partook of the common lot of human kind; were themselves ignorant, though in a less degree than their contemporaries; and wanting critical discernment, but possessed of worldly prudence, they embraced with little scrupulosity, the advantages that were offered to their acceptance. But, at the moment of this acceptance, and indebted as they certainly were, for power and unbounded influence, to the gross ignorance of the times, they ceased not, in their discourses and in their writings, to lament the evil to which they owed their aggrandizement, and to devise means for the improvement of the christian world. In the progress of this inquiry I have often related the expedients to which they resorted for this purpose.

I am aware, that I have yet given no direct answer to the question—Why the Roman bishops performed so little, if, from their station, their talents, and their habits of life, they had so much in their power? The history of their pontificates will best solve the difficulty. And here I would not refer the reader to any distant period—though, in the progress of any period, sufficient light might be collected—but confine his view to that which is more immediately before him, I mean to the thirteenth century. At the commencement of this century, Innocent III. occupied the papal chair, and Boniface VIII. at its termination. In perusing the history of the lives of these prelates, he will discover—that though they were men of high endowments, and not indifferent to the cause of letters—other interests were nearer to their hearts, or, at least, were of such overwhelming magnitude, and such urgent importance as necessarily to absorb the main powers of attention. To ac-

quire territory, and through it the more effectual means of aggrandisement; to extend the prerogative, and by its application, as occasions served, to exercise an unlimited controul over churchmen; and to make even crowns bend to the sovereignty of the tiara, were concerns, compared with which those of literature would appear but as trifles light as air. That such were the views of Innocent was manifested by the series of his actions, though I have sufficiently remarked, that his time was often otherwise engaged.

When, after a hundred years, seldom distinguished by any change of measures, Boniface was called to the helm, a papal historian * thus sums up the events of his pontificate: Casting his eye, says he, over the face of Christendom, and embracing its concerns, he undertook to pacify Italy; to recall the Sicilian kingdom to its duty; to confederate Spain with Gaul; to compel to terms of peace Philip of France and the English Edward; to deter Adolphus, lately raised to the German throne, from the invasion of Gaul; to unite in the bonds of friendship the christian commonwealth, which, as if the Saracens sufficed not to effect its ruin, seemed intent on its own destruction; to reduce, by an armed association, the Greek schismatics to obedience to the Roman church; and again to rescue the Holy Land from the hands of unbelievers.

Such were the designs of Boniface, in few of which he suc-

* Raynald. Ann. an. 1294, n. 1

BOOK V.

ceeded; but every attempt, as it had happened to Innocent, involved him in difficulties and contests. The princes who opposed their views were rendered only more untractable by menaces and anathemas; schemes of moral or intellectual improvement, which, however wisely projected, can be accomplished only in repose, were entirely frustrated, or experienced a very partial success. Those, who, by a proper application of their influence, might have renovated the state of man, or have retarded his intellectual decline, left him plunged in the abyss of ignorance and superstition. The circumstances which attended their deaths were peculiarly awful; and what has been said of one, may be said of both, that they died, "beloved by few, hated by many, and feared by all." It can no longer be a question, why so little was done by them*.

Universities.

Amongst their works, and those of contemporary princes, I mentioned the foundation of schools or academies, on which I may further observe, that these places now acquired the more dignified name of *universities*. Hitherto the public studies had been limited to certain branches of learning; but as the views or desires of men were enlarged, the whole circle of sciences, as far as the allotted period of time would allow, did not appear to be an object beyond the comprehension of youthful minds. Schools then, which professed to embrace *all* the sciences within their walls, and to appoint masters to each, were properly denominated *universities*, of which Paris,

* He that is curious to peruse the history of these pontiffs, may consult Raynald. Annal. Fleury, t. XVIII, XIX. Muratori Annal. d'Ital. t. III. Rer. Ital.

about the year 1215, is said to have set the example. This was soon followed in other countries, and particularly in Italy; where almost every city, owing to the beneficence of princes, or of pontiffs, was honoured with the distinctive title*. To this title privileges were annexed, by which the students and professors acquired distinction, and were formed into a graduated society.

We cannot doubt but that learning was advanced, as the means of instruction were thus multiplied, and as men of talents could readily find a theatre, on which fame and an honourable maintenance might be acquired. But the studies to which most attention was paid, were not those of polite literature. A taste for these was still wanting, or, what amounts to the same, that fostering encouragement was withheld, which is afforded only in the more advanced stages of society. The civil and canon law, theology, and the more abstruse philosophical researches were ardently followed: the two first, because they constituted the sure path to preferment; while, the metaphysical sophist, never failed to acquire celebrity and applause in the field of disputation. Where the ablest professors taught, as we saw in the case of Peter Abeillard and others, young men still continued to despise the hardships of long and expensive journies, in order to become their hearers; and we read on many lists the names of our own countrymen. Among these not a few became themselves teachers even in the schools of Italy; for as Latin was their common lan-

* See Tiraboschi, t. IV. c. 3. Also, Meusel's Leitfaden, p. 677—82.

BOOK V.

guage, every man of talents might aspire to the vacant chairs. In reading the annals of these times, it was often, with a feeling of concern I noticed—that, when a city, by any particular proceeding had given offence to its political head, emperor or king, or had irritated a Roman bishop by opposition —the usual punishment, by command or interdict, was to inhibit its professors from teaching, and to disperse its scholars; and this, at a time, when the ignorance and barbarism of the age were the topics of complaint; for the removal of which the schools themselves had been established!

Schools then and professors there were in abundance, and as far as oral instructions, otherwise termed lectures, could prevail, there were ample means of education: but books were still scarce, and, without their aid, the memory would soon prove a treacherous repository. The work of transcription was necessarily slow, laborious, and expensive; while the *Stationarii*, as they were called, that is, men, who trafficked in books, made large fortunes by lending them out to be read, at exorbitant prices, not in volumes, but in detached parts, according to the estimation in which the author was held. The monks, it is said, laboured; but their copies were enclosed in the cloister; and what was executed by hired artists in the universities, could satisfy the demands only of few. No increase of libraries was to be expected. To have attempted to amass volumes, when so many of an ancient date had perished, and the modern supply was so inadequate, must have proved an useless undertaking.

Other Crusades.

Anxious as I am to trace the rise and progress of every cause, which may be presumed to have contributed towards

the revival of letters, I shall be allowed, I trust, from what has been said, and what will hereafter be detailed, to leave unregarded the expeditions or crusades to the East, which were so frequent in this century. Three had been achieved when the century began; and six more succeeded in its course, of which the last was the second fatal attempt of the French monarch, Louis IX. With this the phrenzy ceased. Dangers and difficulties, calamities and disorders, and the enormous waste of blood and treasure, which hitherto had been despised as of no moment, became at last objects of more cool calculation, by which improvident zeal was abated, and inconsiderate enterprise repressed. The feeble remains of the Latin establishments in the East then rapidly declined; and were utterly overthrown before the expiration of the century.

Modern visionaries do not hesitate to assert, that the crusades were a source of *many* benefits; and they reason as if they knew, that a body of scientific men—such as was appended to a late memorable expedition to Egypt—intelligent, observant, and competent to the deepest researches, had accompanied the armies. One advantage, I am not unwilling to allow, though that is problematical, may have accrued to literature from the nine crusades; and that is, the acquirement of certain Eastern tales, by which the stock in trade of the Trouveurs and Troubadours is thought to have been marvellously enriched *!

* See Hist. of Eng. Poet. sect. III.

BOOK V.

And other Monastic Institutions.

At this time Italy, and soon afterwards other countries, were admitted to the participation of a widely different benefit, by which the progress of letters really received an additional impulse. When the primitive vigour of the early established monastic societies had declined, I remarked that the institution of new orders, particularly of that of Citeaux, by generating a new devotional energy, gave a renewed ardour to the practices of piety; and, as far as they were prescribed, were favourable to the pursuits of science. But these orders also soon degenerated, from the operation of the same causes; and it became necessary—for the due support of the religious character, and more effectually to silence the clamour of many enemies—to form establishments, which, by the austerity of their manners, their contempt of riches, and the gravity and sanctity of their external deportment and maxims, might ensure success to a design of such importance. The century is remarkable for the number and variety of the new monastic establishments*—which shews that the spirit of man was labouring for expansion—but I shall pass by them in order to come to the two mendicant orders of Saints Francis and Dominic. These were formed on the plan which I have just delineated; and wonderful is the admiration which they soon excited. Their founders, indeed, were men of uncommon piety; simple in their language, gentle in their manners, patient of insults, forgiving injuries, and contemning wealth. The children of Dominic were less austere in their practices

* See Helyot, *Hist. des Ordres*, t. VI.

than those of Francis, to whom it was enjoined, that they should consider themselves as pilgrims and strangers in the world; should possess no property in lands, nor any endowments in houses; should support themselves by the free contributions of the faithful; but should, on no occasion, receive money. The extraordinary code of laws, to which these men submitted, is pervaded by a wonderful spirit of humility, of submission to a ruling Providence, of good-will to mankind, which is tinctured by no views of party, no self-interest, no human policy. A society of philosophers was seen to arise in the christian commonwealth, who, by an easy effort, could practise the sublime lessons, which the sages of Greece had boastingly delivered to their followers. What an ancient poet said of Zeno, the father of the Stoic school, *esurire docet, et invenit discipulos*, might with more propriety be applied to Francis, the holy citizen of Assisium. Assisium is a town of Umbria.

St. Dominic was a Spaniard, of the illustrious house of Guzman, and born in the diocese of Osma. He studied in the new schools of Palencia, displayed talents, and became well skilled in the controversies of the times. He was distinguished by his zeal for the orthodox faith; and we first read of him, in the missions of Languedoc, warring, in company with his bishop, against the Albigenses. Moderate men, however, hoped, that his gentle manners and characteristic benevolence would moderate the too ardent propensities of zeal. The tribunal, known by the name of *Inquisition*, had already been established; but, under the guidance of Dominic, it afterwards took a more regular form. From this incident, which, in a more distant view, at least, augured

BOOK V. no benefit to literature, it may, perhaps, be thought, that I have unadvisedly connected with it the name of Dominic.

The first years of the thirteenth century witnessed the rise of both orders. Both the founders visited Rome; and we may be permitted to conjecture, what were the looks and the reflections of the high-minded Innocent III., when the lowly Francis—presenting himself before him with the rules which he had drawn up, modelled on the letter of the gospel maxims—explained his views, and implored the sanction of his authority. The pontiff hesitated; made some objections to the practicability of the plan; but finally yielded his assent. Nor can we doubt but that he had sagacity to foresee, that such societies, while they laboured to reform a vicious age, must, if duly encouraged, prove able auxiliaries in every attempt to enforce just obedience, or even to extend the boundaries of the Roman prerogative.

Europe, in all its regions, was soon in possession of colonies, drafted from these establishments, from whom the most active exertions might be expected; on which, combined with an unblemished name, their existence was at stake. Other monastic orders, when they had sustained the first years of difficulty and hardship, and had acquired wealth, were no longer dependent upon precarious aid. The mendicant Friars left the day to provide for itself; and, like the birds of the air, neither sowed, reaped, nor gathered into barns. That two institutes of this description should every-where have been embraced with ardour; have risen rapidly to celebrity and importance; and have commanded universal

veneration, will not appear extraordinary to those, who have observed the mighty operation on the human mind of any thing uncommon, particularly when stimulated by the warm impulses of devotional sentiment in an age of ignorance and superstition. They soon acquired an unbounded influence; filled the highest posts; taught in many universities; became the animating soul of the hierarchy; and even on many occasions, entered into the cabinets of princes, and presided over the interests of nations. The Roman bishops, sensible of their utility, heaped favours on them; and sometimes, it is thought, increased to a mischievous extent their privileges and exemptions.

But in what did they benefit the cause of literature? Francis himself was utterly void of learning: and aware of its too frequent incompatibility with sentiments of self-abasement, he did not wish that his followers should indulge a taste for human science. They were directed, however, to travel wherever their presence could do good; to converse with persons of all ranks; to instruct the young; and to exhort the multitude. The Dominicans, because public instruction was the main end of their institution, even acquired the appellation of *Preaching Friars*. And had they attempted no more than this; they would have done much, not only in a moral light, but in reference to general improvement. Awed by their external gravity of deportment, the people listened to their admonitions; and insensibly acquired habits of reflection. Their manners were humanized, and their minds enlarged. The preachers addressed them in the vernacular tongue. This tongue, therefore, by exercise, and more by becoming the vehicle of new combinations of

BOOK V. ideas, acquired fluency and copiousness. One of the early disciples of Francis, brother Pacificus, had been a celebrated Trouveur, who, from having learned how to engage attention, would now lead it to objects of higher importance and more calculated to promote intellectual improvement. In one word, it seems to me that taking society in the state in which it was, ignorant from long neglect, and vitiated from the operation of many causes, but, with a strong thirst for knowledge, and propensity for improvement—no better means, for the promotion of this end, could have been devised, than what the Friars practised. They lived, as it were, with the people, of whom they formed a part; but retiring, occasionally, from their view, and again appearing with an air of increased gravity, they made their way more effectually to the heart; and fixing the principles of virtue in many minds, prepared the soil for the reception of every species of intellectual improvement*.

Though I said, that the humble Francis was void of all learning, I should have added that, he had some turn for poetry, and composed in the vulgar tongue of Italy. The subject, we cannot doubt, was moral; and it is not proved, that he was not, in point of time, the first poet of his country. He had visited France, in the capacity of a merchant; had listened to the songs of the Troubadours; had witnessed their effects on the public mind; and returned home, prepossessed

* On the rise and early progress of these mendicant orders, consult any ecclesiastical writers, particularly Helyot, *Hist. des Ordres Monast.* t. vi.

in their favour and in that of the French people. Hence, it is said, he acquired, among his countrymen, the name of Francis. That he himself should afterwards have become a versifier, but from motives more pure, and on subjects more edifying, was natural.

Should it be insisted, that the first members of these societies were illiterate; it must also be admitted, that this ceased to be the character of their immediate successors. The spirit of rivalry between them and the orders of the old establishment, clerical and monastic, would soon urge them to vigorous exertion; the possession of the good-will of the multitude, and the consciousness of an ascendency gained by the force of natural eloquence, would prompt them to employ the means by which that possession, might be secured, and that ascendency be increased. They well knew that the study of the best models, particularly of the ancient fathers, could alone supply those means, and to them they would not fail to have recourse. In fine, the desire of excellence, and of honest fame, which perhaps, is never extinguished in any bosom, would suggest that the paths of science, which had led other men to renown, were equally open to the children of Dominic and Francis. And we shall soon see, that from this family issued the most celebrated scholars of the age.

Whilst other countries received the first visits of these zealous men, England was not deprived of their exertions. In 1221, the Dominicans, whom our countrymen, from the colour of their upper garment, called *Black Friars*, landed in this country; and, within three years, they were followed by the Franciscans, or *Grey Friars*. It is also worthy of remark

BOOK V. —because it shews, that the acquirement of science was already in their view—that the university of Oxford became their favourite station; where they were kindly received, and where they soon opened their schools. Speaking of the Dominicans, the Oxford historian says*: "In a short time, many of them became eminent in the walks of theology and philosophy."

The Franciscans, in the meantime, made a rapid progress, collecting new members to their fraternity from all sides. They secured the public favour by their irreproachable lives, and obtained establishments in the principal cities. They enjoyed great celebrity at Oxford; and as the confined limits of their first dwelling could not contain the multitudes that flocked to them, the benevolence of wealthy friends enabled them to commence a more spacious edifice, during the construction of which, men of science and of birth were seen †, "bearing stones and mortar on their shoulders."

Robert Grosteste, afterwards Bishop of Lincoln, taught at Oxford at this time, with great celebrity; and being an admirer of this new colony of friars, he was easily induced to read lectures in their school. The scholasticism, which I have described, was still in vogue, and there was a great confluence of auditors. The superior, who was himself void of learning, but who gloried in the talents of his professor, was anxious to ascertain, if possible, what progress the

* Hist. et Antiq. Univer. Oxon. p. 64. † Ibid, p. 70.

scholars had made, and he accordingly entered the school one day, as they were rehearsing their questions; when he found to his astonishment, that the subject before them was —*Whether there be a God?* "Alas, alas!" exclaimed the good man, "ignorant simplicity is daily gaining heaven; while these learned disputants are arguing about the existence of heaven's Master." After this he became solicitous to turn their minds to what, he had been told to believe, were more substantial studies; and for this purpose, he procured from Rome improved copies of the *Decretals*.

After the reluctant departure of Grosteste, other learned Doctors continued to lecture in the Franciscan schools; out of which, as records state, proceeded men of deep erudition, who did honour to Oxford, to the nation, and to foreign universities, by their theological and philosophical proficiency*. On the death of Grosteste, who had ever shewn a peculiar attachment to the two mendicant orders, he bequeathed his own works, if not all his books, written mostly with his own hand, to the Franciscans of Oxford. Indeed, these men are said to have been active in collecting whatever was excellent or rare in literature, and so abundant were their means of doing it, that copious libraries were formed in all their convents; whilst the secular clergy and others, ashamed, as may be presumed, of their remissness, made the laudable measure a serious subject of complaint†. They objected

* See the History just quoted.

† Ibid p. 77.

that "From the want of means of acquiring learning, the whole clerical order must be absorbed in these Friars."

As yet neither Oxford nor Cambridge had any endowed foundations, afterwards called colleges, unless, it may be, those schools, in the former place, said to have been founded by Alfred, which were much neglected at this period. But, before the close of the century, we read of Baliol, and Merton, and University, the latter founded, indeed, by Alfred, but now restored, and more richly endowed. Cambridge, at the same time, could boast only of Peter-house.

The advantages, however, which Oxford seemed to enjoy from the impulse given to its studies, and the favour shewn to the new-comers, were soon interrupted by jealousies and dissensions, which the conflict of opposite interests had a strong tendency to produce. But at Paris, where the same orders had been received, the disputes were more violent and more continued, especially between the Dominicans and the university. They may be seen in the histories of the times; for it is no part of my province to describe them, or to furnish details of the contests among the medicants themselves, or the intestine divisions of the Franciscans concerning the sense of their founder's rule.

The use of modern languages, the compositions of the Troubadours and Trouveurs, the state of Italy, the patronage of princes and of some pontiffs, the establishment of new schools or universities, and the foundation of new monastic orders which I have mentioned, were the principal means, by

which an increased energy appeared to be given to the studies of the thirteenth century, and the public mind prepared for a more comprehensive improvement.

Divines and Philosophers: Thomas Aquinas.

Thomas Aquinas was amongst the first, or rather was himself the first scholar of the age, in theology, and in the various branches of philosophy, as they were then taught. He was born in Italy about the year 1225, and was styled in the schools the *Angelic Doctor*. After completing his first studies, he entered into the order of St. Dominic; went to Paris, and thence to Cologne, where theology was taught by Albert the Great, a member of the same order. Under him was laid the foundation of his future fame. After this we read of him as himself theological lecturer in the various convents of his order, at Cologne, and at Paris, where he was admitted to the degree of doctor: and then in Rome. About the year 1269, he once more visited the French capital, where his presence was ardently desired; he then returned to Rome; from which city, at the request of the Sicilian king, he went to Naples. Here his lectures closed. Called by Gregory X. to assist at the œcumenical council, which was held at Lyons, in 1274, he fell sick on the road, and died, before he had completed his fiftieth year.

Aquinas left numerous works; and though, it is plain from the many points, which he incidently discusses, that no scientific subject had escaped his notice, yet he had directed the mighty powers of his mind principally to theology in all its departments, scriptural, dogmatical, and moral. He wrote commentaries on the Master of *Sentences*, and on many books of Scripture; a collection of various treatises in seventy-three

BOOK V. numbers, besides other works; and to crown the whole, his celebrated *Sum* of Theology, divided into three parts. To these we may add his Commentaries on the books of Aristotle, who was then generally deemed the oracle of all philosophical science. I have remarked, how imperfect the translations of the works of this great man then were; but I have seen it somewhere observed, that the comments of Aquinas, notwithstanding every obstacle, may be deemed superior to those of the Arabian, and to many of the Greek writers. But with respect to the science of nature, as it is founded on observation and experiment, it was equally hidden from them all.

I do not pretend to have recently studied the works of Aquinas; but there was a period in my life, when I read many of them with attention; and the following was the impression which the perusal left upon my mind. His genius seemed comprehensive and penetrating; his erudition had passed the boundaries, within which the learning of the age was confined. His questions were drawn from an accurate survey, and a luminous division of the several subjects. His manner of reasoning was closely argumentative; his conclusions were deduced from evidence, and guided by the received rules of the syllogistic art; and the whole enforced and illustrated by texts of scripture, by passages from the ancient fathers, and as often as there was opportunity, by the supposed opinions of the Stagyrite. It is plain, that I allude principally, to the *Sum of Theology*. But in this *Sum* are many things, which must appear trifling, or rather the offspring of a mind, ranging without controul, through the ideal world of metaphysical abstractions and fanciful chimeras. This,

however, was scholasticism, from the magic influence of which no talents could, at that time, be expected to be exempt; as it constituted the field, on which alone they could be exhibited with applause. The terms also which were then used, though obscure to our perceptions, and dissonant to our ears, were the familiar technicalities of the art, to which the whole reasoning process was at that period attached.

The language of Aquinas, which is always perspicuous, and precise, occasionally approaches, where the subject will allow it, to the confines of elegance; and hence we feel the more impelled to lament, that a mind of such superior powers had not received a better direction, or a different culture; and that his judgment had not been matured and his taste refined by an early intimacy with the great authors of Greece and Rome. But this is in fact only to regret, that he lived in the thirteenth century. With these helps, I do not think it would be too much to say, that Thomas Aquinas would have known no superior, even in a much later period than that in which he lived, and I believe no equal*.

St. Bonaventure.

Contemporary with Aquinas was Bonaventure, a native also of Italy, a friar of the Franciscan order, who studied with him, who flourished in the university of Paris and who died in the same year. His master was our countryman, Alexander Hales, who embraced the same monastic profession.

* See Dupin Bib. Eccles. Brucker, t. III. Tiraboschi, t. IV. Fabric. Bib. Lat. med. ætat. t. III.

BOOK V.

The pursuits of Bonaventure were the same as those of Aquinas; and he was second to him only in talents, by the exercise of which, and more by the eminent virtues which were conspicuous in both, he acquired the reputation of a great and holy man. He was created a cardinal by Gregory X., and raised to the see of Albano; and having accompanied him to the council of Lyons, where he gave signal proofs of his extensive learning, he died in that city before its close. His works are principally theological and ascetic. They are not so numerous as those of his illustrious contemporary, nor so deeply tinctured with philosophy: but written in the same spirit of scholasticism, where scholasticism could be admitted, and with the same ardour for the propagation of religious truth and disinterested virtue *.

Albertus Magnus.

I have mentioned Albertus Magnus, as the master of Aquinas, and Alexander Hales, as the master of Bonaventure; the first a German and a Dominican, the second an Englishman and a Franciscan. Of Alexander I shall only say, that he taught with applause, and wrote in the usual style, on the usual subjects of the schools †. Albertus, as the epithet of Magnus may insinuate, took a wider range, and traversed the intellectual, the theological, the moral, and the physical world. He was unwillingly promoted to the See of Ratisbon, which he relinquished within three years, when he returned to the repose of his cell, and to the exercises of public teaching. He

* See the same authors, also Cave Hist. Lit.

† See Leland de Scrip. Brit.

died in 1280, leaving works behind him which have filled twenty-one volumes in *folio**. Those who have read these works, which comprise commentaries on Aristotle, on the Scriptures, and on the Master of Sentences, sermons, miscellanies, and lucubrations on nature in her productions and phenomena, have asked with surprise, What could have caused him to receive the appellation of the *Great*, unless it were the geometrical bulk of his labours? But, in this respect, we judge with little equity. The perusal of that, which in the present improved state of human knowledge, is calculated to excite only disgust, was then heard with vivid admiration, when Albert lectured in the schools of Cologne, and of other German cities. I will, besides, observe, that at this time every eminent teacher acquired some distinctive appellation, as the *subtle*, the *irrefragable*, the *seraphic*, the *angelic*. This was the fashion of the schools, proceeding, either from whim, or from a wish to render a marked homage to the virtues, or the peculiar talents of the professors.

Amongst the advantages to the cause of literature, which seemed to result from the institution of the monastic orders, I think that I omitted one, which was already become manifest. We have seen the learned teachers, whatever might have been the country of their nativity, pass from city to city, diffusing knowledge, and inciting to the acquisition by their example. They sometimes resided many years in a place; at other times their stay was transient; but, at all times, it was regulated by the will of the

* Dupin, Cave, and Bibl. Lat. med. ætat. t. II.

BOOK V. superior; and that was done which he deemed expedient. It did not depend on the individual inclination of Aquinas, whether he studied in Italy, at Cologne, or at Paris; or whether he taught in these or in other cities. This was prescribed by the proper authority; and he obeyed. Thus, a commonwealth of letters was established, first for the benefit of the order, and then for that of the public of all nations. The ablest members of this fraternity went in search of learning, wherever it could be obtained with most convenience and advantage; and afterwards distributed the same through a hundred channels. The Latin language, which was known to all, was the universal vehicle of communication. Before this there was a general complaint, that teachers could not be found, unless the salaries were adequate to their wishes. But when the monastic orders began to teach, men of the first talents entered themselves in the list of instructors; and, from that moment, the partial attachments of kindred and of country being generously suspended, the abilities of individuals were devoted to the good of all. But Paris was the principal theatre; which was frequented by an incredible number of students, so fascinating continued to be the academical exercises, and so ardent the love of public disputation.

I could pursue, with pleasure, the long list of able men, who, from this and other countries, continued in an uninterrupted succession, to profess the scholastic art. I might mention John Wallis, a Franciscan, who having studied at Oxford, taught in Paris, where he acquired the name of the *Tree of Life*, and of whose talents and erudition Leland speaks with his usual exaggeration. To him I might add John Pecham, of the same order, who studied in Oxford and in Paris, in both which

cities he lectured; and afterwards went to Lyons, and to Rome, BOOK V.
where he acquired great distinction by his legal knowledge, and
where he was raised to the vacant see of Canterbury. I could
mention John of Paris, a native of that city, and Richard
Middleton; the first a Dominican, the second a Franciscan;
and Giles de Colonna, an illustrious Roman, of the order of
St. Austin, who studied and taught in Paris and other cities,
and who passed his life in many honourable and learned toils.
These and many others, some secular ecclesiastics, but far the
greatest part members of the new religious orders, were con-
stantly employed, as I have represented them, in diffusing
science, such as it was, and fomenting the literary ardour* of
the times.

But there is one man who must not be thus transiently no- Roger Bacon.
ticed; I mean Roger Bacon, born early in the century.
After finishing the elementary studies of grammar at Oxford,
he devoted his whole attention to philosophy, the recesses of
which he investigated with a sagacity which was hitherto un-
exampled. Having his mind thus richly stored, he repaired
to Paris in the company of many other youths. Paris, ob-
serves the historian†, was now much frequented by the En-
glish, and particularly by the Oxonians. Here Bacon found
a copious variety of intellectual nutriment. He sedulously
applied himself to languages, to history, to jurisprudence, to

* See Leland *de Scrip. Brit.* Cave *Hist. Lit.* also *Hist. Univer. Oxon.* passim. and Bib. Lat. med. ætat.

† Hist. Univers. Oxon. sub. an. 1292.

BOOK V. the mathematics, and to medicine; and closing the wide circle by theology, he was appointed to a public chair, and received academical honours. His own country was now to be benefited by his learning. He returned to Oxford, and by the persuasion, it is said, of Grosteste, (if not earlier) the friend and patron of the order, entered among the Franciscans. He prosecuted his former studies in the retirement of a cell; took a more accurate survey of nature and her laws; methodised the sciences, and particularly the philosophy which he had deeply imbibed; and by the help of languages, especially that of Greece, accumulating observations which the common herd of scholars found it impossible to obtain, opened a way to new inquiries. A mind like his could observe, could investigate, and could invent; but it was not possible to advance without instruments. He is said himself to have constructed instruments; to have engaged the ingenuity of others; and to have expended a large sum in the purchase of books, and the prosecution of experiments. From the titles of his works, it appears, that perspective, astronomy, optics, geometry, the mechanic arts, chemistry, and alchymy, were amongst his favourite pursuits. He delivered lectures upon these and other subjects.

Leland, in his usual style, wishes for a hundred tongues and a hundred mouths, that he might be able to celebrate the wonderful discoveries of Bacon as they deserved. His contemporaries were less adulatory. Many wondered; but in their stupid admiration they ascribed his inventions to the black-art. In his knowledge of the Hebrew and the Greek languages, they saw nothing but a medium of holding a secret intercourse with the devil; and the same suspicion was confirmed

by the lines of circles and triangles. Nor were these the surmises only of the vulgar; men even of some education entertained the same; the brethren of his order refused to admit his works into their libraries, and are said to have procured his incarceration.

In the progress of man towards improvement, there are certain stages, which, if too rapidly passed, appear to retard, rather than accelerate, his advancement. The discoveries of Roger Bacon were productive of little benefit to the thirteenth century. His contemporaries could not appreciate their value; and ascribing them to necromancy, or supernatural agency, they added new strength to former prejudices, and increased the obstinacy of ignorance. On his side, the philosopher despised the boasted learning of the schools, not considering that this very learning, by giving exercise to general talents, was perhaps best adapted to prepare the mind for that degree of light, which was tardily but gradually dawning around it. Speaking of his own times, he says: "Never was there such a show of wisdom, such exercises in all branches, and in all kingdoms, as within these forty years. Teachers are every-where dispersed, in cities, in castles, and in villages, taken particularly from the new monastic orders. Yet never was there more ignorance, more error. The common herd of students, poring over their wretched versions (of the works of Aristotle), lose their time, their application, and their money. Yet, if the senseless multitude applaud, they are satisfied." He elsewhere says of those versions, that, if he had them in his power, they should be committed to the flames, as serving only to perpetuate error and multiply ignorance.

BOOK V.

The opinion of his own talents and acquirements was widely different. In his *Opus Majus*, addressed to Clement IV. speaking of himself, he says, that, from the time he had learned his alphabet, he had spent forty years in the study of the sciences and languages; but that now, in the half of one year at most, he would undertake to communicate all his knowledge to any diligent man, possessed of a sufficient capacity of retention, under certain easy conditions which he mentions. He doubts not but that within three days, he can put it into the power of such a man to learn the Hebrew tongue, in such a manner as accurately to understand what may be necessary for the elucidation of the scriptures. He will infuse the Greek language in the same space of time, so that whatever has been written, concerning theology and philosophy, shall be clearly comprehended; and as to geometry, it shall be fully developed in one week, and arithmetic in a second. What opinion must we form of the extent of the knowledge which could be communicated with this singular rapidity; or ought we to lament, that friar Bacon has not left behind him an art of teaching so inestimably valuable? He died about the year 1284, and was buried in the Franciscan convent at Oxford*.

Robert Grosteste.

I thought to have closed this view with Bacon; but Grosteste, whom I have more than once mentioned, demands some further notice. He also had studied in the sister universities

* See more on this extraordinary man in the *Hist. Univers. Oxon.*—See also Leland, Cave, etc. His *Opus Majus* was published in 1733.

of Oxford and Paris, in the last of which he acquired the knowledge of the Greek and Hebrew languages, and of the modern French. To these were added, the usual stores of philosophy and divinity, and such other learning as the Gallic academy could supply. As a teacher in Oxford, his fame was great. He wrote at the same time, and published a treatise on the *Sphere*, and on the method of *Computation*, with other philosophical tracts. His efforts were equally distinguished in theological and scriptural research, in which he was assisted by his knowledge of the Hebrew and the Greek, which he occasionally translated. Roger Bacon, who was remarked to be very parsimonious of his praise, speaking of the qualifications of a translator, observes, that Grosteste alone could be said to understand the learned languages. He adds that he was well acquainted "with the mathematics and with perspective." Nothing, indeed, was unattainable by him. But it was not before the close of life, when he had collected round him learned men and learned works, that he was able to translate accurately *."

He was a great admirer of the French language, which he sometimes preferred to Latin and to his own, when the subject, which he treated, was popular, and he wished to engage the attention of the great. Such was his *Manual of Sin*. In what has been called the religious allegory of the *Chateau d'Amour*, in which he represented the fundamental articles of christian belief, under the ideas of chivalry; he manifested

* See *Hist. Univers. Oxon.* sub an. 1227.

BOOK V. a fondness for the metre and music of the French minstrels. In this respect also his views were benevolent; but as the example of so eminent a scholar would necessarily induce imitation, the practice of writing in French served still more to impede the progressive improvement of the English language, by rendering it an object of less attention. It has been well observed, that in the infancy of language and composition, nothing is wanted but writers; and at this period even the most artless have their use*.

Grosteste could not escape the accusation of necromancy: but his virtues were so exalted, and his reputation in the schools was so high, that, when a vacancy happened about the year 1235, he was called to the See of Lincoln. He manifested great wisdom in this important charge; but opposing, as became a christian bishop, the extortionary system of the Roman court, which at no time was more severely felt, he incurred the displeasure of the pontiff; and was cited to appear before him. It is related that he obeyed the summons; when he ably defended the cause of his church; and was dismissed. Others say, that he was afterwards excommunicated. However this may be, and however high he may stand in the estimation of many, as the champion of ecclesiastical liberty, his principles, on the unbounded latitude of the Roman prerogative and its exercise, were not founded on any just views of the primitive discipline; nor was there less servility in his conduct; nor less adulation in his language;

* Hist. of Eng. Poet. vol. I. sect. II.

than if he had been plunged in the deepest abyss of gross ignorance and obsequious superstition. This is attested by his writings*. When Innocent IV. indeed, presented his infant nephew to a stall in Lincoln cathedral, his indignation was roused, and he expressed his opposition with a becoming fortitude; but when, in conformity with an order from the Roman nuncio, the bishop, about the same time, began to assess the clergy, and to collect a tax without the consent of the king—and when even that king, though the weak Henry III., complained—Grosteste made use of the following remonstrance: "Your majesty must be sensible, that the authority and precept of our supreme bishop compel us to do this, whom not to obey would be as the sin of witchcraft, and as the sin of idolatry." On another occasion, when the same prince refused to surrender the *regalia* of Winchester into the hands of a bishop, whom the pontiff approved, the learned Robert, with some indignation, remarked that, "by so doing he evidently opposed him, to whom, whilst all other princes were bound in fealty, he, by the charter and oath of his father John, under the severest penalty, was especially subject." And speaking of the power of bishops, he hesitates not to say, that it is derived "from the plenitude of the papal jurisdiction." I could multiply the instances of these sentiments †. Grosteste died about the year 1253.

Were I to speak of such works of this prelate as I have

* See Append. ad Fascicul. rerum Expetend. et Fugiend. t. II. p. 244.

† Ibid.

BOOK V.

seen, I should say that, though they, certainly, announce talents and reading, they are destitute of elegance, and evince no acquaintance with classical authorities. But still, when compared with those of Friar Bacon, who seems to have utterly disregarded all embellishments of style, they may be deemed entitled to some encomium in point of scholarship *.

Both these great men, it seems, had cultivated the Greek and Hebrew languages. The first had never been utterly neglected; and the means of acquiring the second were amply supplied by the Jews, who, from the time of the Norman conquest, had been permitted to settle in the country. In Oxford they were numerous, where they acquired property, and opened a school for the instruction of their own people, and of many christian students, in the Hebrew literature. But towards the end of this century, they were banished; and the suddenness of their dismissal obliging them to sell their moveable effects, great stores of manuscripts were purchased by the convents, and collected by the curiosity of individuals. The friars of Oxford, prompted, doubtless, by the zeal of Roger Bacon, are said to have signally enriched themselves on the occasion †.

The various Fortunes of Aristotle.

As the name of Aristotle has been often mentioned, it may not be uninteresting briefly to state the various fortunes

* See Leland, Cave, Anglia Sacra, t. II. Bib. Lat. med. ætat. t. III.

† Hist. Antiq. Oxon. p. 77, 132.

which his authority experienced in the course of this century, particularly in the schools of Paris. That all the translations of his works, which had been hitherto circulated in the west, were remarkably inaccurate, may be asserted on the evidence of Bacon, and on that of other writers*. Still they continued to be read, and to have the force of oracles. In the best ages of the christian church, not only the Latin fathers—who might be thought incompetent judges---but even the Greek had objected to the use, which some were disposed to make of the writings of Aristotle and of other philosophers, in explaining the tenets of their faith. They affirmed that its simplicity would be corrupted, and its truths bewildered in sophisms. But nothing could check the arrogance of the conceited pretenders to science. Platonism owed its introduction to the Alexandrian doctors; but Aristotle soon acquired a predominating sway. This increased as scholasticism became established; and the reader will recollect the triumphant career of Abeillard, and the complaints of the more temperate St. Bernard. That sophist, with those who followed in the same path, were denominated the labyrinths of France, whom the spirit of Aristotle had inspired.

A provincial synod, which was held at Paris in 1209, in consequence of some recent errors, ordered, that such works of the philosopher as had been lately brought from Constantinople, and translated in Latin, and had begun to

* Hist. Univers. Oxon. sub an. 1272.

BOOK V.

be read in the schools, should be burned, and that no one should hereafter either read, or keep them in his possession. They are generally described as treating of *metaphysics*. Six years after this, a Roman legate, despatched by Innocent III. in order still further to regulate the schools of Paris, directed, that the *dialectic* or *organum* of Aristotle should be studied; but forbad the perusal of his metaphysical and physical works, with their commentaries. In 1231, a rescript of Gregory IX. not mentioning his other works, ordains, that those on natural philosophy—*libri illi naturales*—which the provincial synod had interdicted, should not be used in the university, till they had been examined, and purified from all suspicion of error. In 1265, the regulations of Innocent III. were confirmed by a legate sent by Clement IV*.

Up to this period, such appear to have been the fortunes of Aristotle in the schools of Paris, which, though they experienced some fluctuations, still rather gained ground; while some, even in these schools, little regarded the papal ordinances, and elsewhere, as at Oxford and Cologne, the works of the Stagyrite continued, as they had previously done, to engage the attention of the learned. But, what is most remarkable in the history of opinions, is a command, issued, about the year 1261, by Urban IV. to Thomas Aquinas, directing him to translate, and write a commentary on, the

* Ivan. Launvius *de varia Aristotelis fortuna.*—Also *Hist. Univers. Oxon.* sub an. 1272.

works of Aristotle. The works were translated, though not by Aquinas; who wrote a commentary on those books, among others, which had been so severely proscribed at Paris. The same had been done by Albertus Magnus. Urban was himself a philosopher, and devoted to study. This circumstance will account for his conduct, as likewise for that of his successor Clement IV. who, in the first year of his pontificate, 1265, and four years at most after the command given to Aquinas, renewed, through the medium of his legate at Paris, the prohibition against the works of Aristotle*!

In the following century, the attention of the Popes was still occupied by the writings of the philosopher, but they gradually obtained an increase of favour and indulgence. One work after another was licensed, though reclamations were sometimes heard, till the public voice finally triumphed; and Aristotle became, as the oracle of the schools, by a formal decree of the university †. Such is the uncertainty of human approbation, and such are the vicissitudes of human opinions.

The Historians.

From the accuracy, which the scholastic method had introduced in every process of reasoning, and from the ardour with which it was pursued, it was natural, *a priori*, to have concluded, that other studies would have experienced its effects; and that the evidence of reason or of facts, rather than

* Launvius *ut ante*, Tiraboschi, t. iv. p. 172.

† Launvius, *ut ante*.

BOOK V. dogmatic assertion or vulgar prejudice, would be sought and preferred in every inquiry. This I should have particularly expected in the writers of history. But, nevertheless, in historical compositions we still perceive the same want of critical discrimination, the same fondness for the marvellous, and the same excess of credulity, as we noticed in the writers of the darkest period. They likewise express the same confidence, that they shall gain credit with their readers.

Some good-natured apologies have been offered for these defects. What guides, it is asked, had they? What lights, by which to discern truth from falsehood*? They had the classical works of the ancients, which have become our guides, and which, it is pretended, that their monks were perpetually transcribing. They had the same general nature as ourselves; the natural world presented the same laws to their contemplation as to ours; they had the same passions to delineate; they had the same experience of the deviation from truth and the liability to error; and, in short, the great line of distinction between truth and falsehood was as clearly perceptible in the thirteenth century, as it is in the nineteenth. But they manifested no solicitude in the detection of error or the establishment of truth; they carelessly overlooked the line of distinction between them; and they artfully preferred the puerile and the marvellous, which constitute the delight of an ignorant age, to the simple exposition of facts. It was, perhaps, a willingness to comply with the popular appetite

* Storia della Let. Ital. IV. p. 337.

for tales of wonder and prodigies which mock credibility, which induced the writers of history to be less wary and scrutinizing than their contemporaries, the schoolmen, in the investigation of metaphysical truth.

Italian.

The writers of Italian history are divided into those, who have left Chronicles of General History, from the earliest times down to their own days; those who have treated on the histories of some particular state, or province, or city. These are numerous, and are sometimes written in Italian, but oftener in Latin; generally in prose, but sometimes in verse. In recording the events of modern times, it is agreed they display much truth and accuracy; and their narratives have an air of simplicity and candour, which irresistibly conciliates belief. But in respect to times, long anterior to those in which they wrote, they merely repeat what was before said, whilst they labour to augment the mass of fabulous matter; and hence their compilations possess no value*. The taste of writing history in verse, not peculiar to the soil of Italy, could never have gained admirers, but in an age, when the single difficulty of the execution was presumed to constitute a peculiar merit. They thought, that the truth of history was improved by being versified.

Though the subject is little deserving of notice, except as it shews—notwithstanding the great learning of many, and their

* See Rerum Ital. Scrip. in which compilation is given the valuable part of these histories, introduced by learned prefaces.

BOOK VI.

logical acuteness—the general deficiency of intellectual culture, I will mention, that, the celebrated work, which afterward, on account of its supposed excellence, acquired the appellation of the *Golden Legend*, appeared towards the close of the century. It was a compilation of the *Lives of the Saints*, of which the materials were brought together from all quarters, with a rich tissue of fabulous extravagance. It was written by James da Voragine, an Italian Dominican, afterward archbishop of Genoa. The popularity of this work did not cease with the times in which it was written; and though, in order to exculpate its author, who had taught the sciences, and was famed as a public preacher, it is said, that he merely collected what had been written by others, it still remains an irrefragable proof of the genuine taste and credulity of the individual. Indeed the love of the marvellous, was so predominant in his character, that, when he published a *Chronicle* of the city of Genoa, he took care to embellish it with the decorations of the *Golden Legend**.

Other countries had, at the same time, their historians. The conquest of Constantinople by the Latins was written by Geoffrye Villehardoin, a Frenchman, who accompanied the expedition; and the History of the reign of Philip Augustus by Rigord, while William le Breton, celebrated the same reign in Latin verse. The interesting history of the Life of Louis IX. in French, by Irinville, his confidential friend and

* The *Chronicle*, without its fables, is edited by Muratori, t. IX. Scrip. Rer. Ital.

companion, properly belongs to the following century. But I may be permitted to pass over these and other writers of history, the general character of whose works has been faithfully delineated, and to pause at that of our countryman, Matthew Paris, the learned, the candid, the exact, monk of St. Albans.

Matthew Paris.

Few incidents of his life are known. It appears that he had early acquired the character of a morigerous and well-disciplined monk; as he was employed, at the request of the Norwegians, to reform the manners of the monastic order in those countries; and, we find him much favoured after his return, by our reigning prince, Henry III. We are told, that, from ancient times, it had been the practice in the British court, to maintain a chronicler, at the king's expense, who attended his person, and whose office it was to record events. It is added, that the record was not opened during the prince's reign, nor during that of his sons; but was carefully preserved among the archives of the realm. Whatever we may think of the truth of this precautionary measure, Matthew Paris, certainly, lived much in the family of Henry; was with him "in his palace, at his table, and in his closet," where he received from his mouth the minutes of many transactions, which he committed to writing, with the general events of the times. This he himself relates. To knowledge thus acquired and to daily observation, he added, a deep research into the records of former times; an insight into general science, and the lighter embellishments of the arts. His hand-writing was beautifully elegant; and he understood design and painting, many specimens of which served to

BOOK V. decorate his historical productions. He died in the year 1259*.

The principal work of Paris is his *Historia Major*, comprising the reigns of the eight first kings of the Norman dynasty, from the year 1066 to 1259. It is acknowledged that this work—the events of three and twenty years excepted—was written by Roger de Wendover, a monk of the same convent, which Matthew only transcribed, with a few alterations, and with an addition of the succeeding events to the time of his own death. What follows to the year 1273, the close of the reign of Henry III. was supplied by William Rishanger, who was also a monk of St. Alban's, and the chronicler of Edward I. An abstract of this work, under the title of *Chronica*, since called the *Historia Minor*, and containing some events omitted in the larger history, was likewise compiled by Paris; who also wrote the *Lives* of the Offas, the two Mercian kings, who founded the Abbey of St. Alban's, as well as the Lives of the twenty-three Abbots who had governed the monastery.

For sincerity of narration, truth of colouring, and extent of information, the Historia Major may be justly deemed as valuable a work, as this or any other age had produced. Though Matthew Paris were not the sole author, yet he

* See the Prefaces and Testimonies prefixed to the London edition of Matthew Paris, by Dr. Watts.

made it his own; and as he is chargeable with its defects, he is entitled to the praise due to its excellence. If we except, perhaps, the two Williams of Malmesbury and Neuburg; the most Latin of our Latin historiographers is the monk of St. Alban's. His style, however, is unequal. It is sometimes remarkable for its spirit or its elegance; and at others for its inflation, or its insipidity; or in other words, it is ever in unison with the character of the age. What is most singular in him, redounds much to his praise. He was ever a warm advocate for justice and for truth; whilst abuses, of every description, and from whatever quarter they might proceed, provoked his inexorable enmity. His humour has been thought too severe and caustic: Trojan and Tyrian equally smart under his lash; and it is with strong approbation we see, that when monk, prelate, prince, emperor, or pope, has incurred his displeasure, that is, has deviated from what, in his apprehension, was the line of rectitude; he is unreserved in his censure, and his language is that of vigour and intrepidity. Those who have been too servilely devoted to the Roman court, have blamed this undaunted freedom of the English monk, whom they represent as ill-affected towards their bishop; and have seized with avidity every opportunity of aspersing his fame, vilifying his conduct, exposing his councils, and loading him with invective. "Take from the work," says the learned Baronius*, "these fatal blemishes; and I will call it a golden volume, admirably

* Annal. Eccles. sub an. 996, n. 63.

BOOK V. compiled from authentic documents, and faithfully reporting their contents."

It would not be difficult, from the *Annals* of the illustrious cardinal themselves, to prove his censure of the worthy historian to be unjust. For he stated only the grievances which were felt, and re-echoed only the loud complaints which were heard, in every country, and in none more than in his own. But this belongs not to me. I will further only observe, that the history of Matthew Paris abounds with various information, concerning the transactions of other states and other churches; and that the whole is interspersed with many fabulous narratives, which, whilst they afforded entertainment to the readers of the thirteenth century, are to us an additional proof, that no mind, however highly cultivated and richly stored, can wholly escape from the influence of the errors and prejudices which abound in the times in which he lives. It is the tribute which intellectual superiority pays to the infirmities of our common nature.

Poetry. When I spoke of the French poets, the Trouveurs and Troubadours, I observed, that the Provençal, which was the language of the latter, was cultivated by many natives of Italy; while no experiment was made on the versifying powers of their own tongue, or it was used only for the purposes of colloquial intercourse. It is, indeed, admitted*,

* Storia della Letterat. Ital. t. IV. of which the whole third book deserves to be read.

that no example of their prose-writing had been discovered, which is more ancient than the middle of the age. And when the Sicilians, the Tuscans, and others, made their first essays, they were void of elegance and harmony. I do not pretend to have ascertained why they were wanting also in that bold imagery and those wild approaches to the sublime, which are observed in the early productions of more northern nations. It might indeed be conjectured, that as the Italians were no more than the mutilated and adulterated reliques of a people, that had once been great, and not a primitive race, rising into manhood with vigorous luxuriance, only feeble and languid efforts, rather than those of a vivid and irregularly daring character, were to be expected. The observation, if founded on any truth, will equally apply, at this time, to other European nations, and account, in some degree, for the faint and debilitated insipidity of their poetical compositions. Another reason may have been, that, feeling no elevation of mind from the influence of manners, or the views of religion, they were satisfied with adopting any tale or popular subject which was presented to them, and which they clothed in their own homely attire. The historian of Italian literature, with all his partialities, has, on this subject at least, nothing interesting to produce; and we may leave this soil of Hesperia without regret*.

Saxon and English Languages.

But shall we elsewhere find a soil at all more propitious to the muses? I have no antiquarian taste, that is, I cannot

* Storia della Letterat. Ital. t. IV. of which the whole third book deserves to be read.

BOOK V.

discover elegance of form in the works of art, because they happen to be signalized by rust and the scars of age; nor do I trace the lineaments of genius, in the productions of intellect, because their phraseology is obsolete, or the copies of them are rare. The productions of France and England were, at this time, so very similar from the constant intercourse between the two countries, that it may seem indifferent, from which side of the channel, I select specimens of the poetic art. The only perceptible difference was in the diction. The Norman-French was, indeed, still spoken at our court, and was in general use among the nobility and their dependants; but the Anglo-Saxon or English was advancing fast towards a definite and characteristic standard.

The fabulous history of Britain, written in Latin by Geoffrey of Monmouth—that is, translated by him into that language from the British or Armorica*—about the year 1125, had excited a very general curiosity; but it could be read only by scholars. It was, therefore, as soon as might be, translated into French by Robert Wace, a native of Jersey; and, about thirty years later, that is, about 1185, a Saxon version was made by one Layamon, a priest. Both versions are metrical; and the Saxon, I should have said, was taken or imitated not from the Latin, but from the French translation.

---

*The original copy was brought into England by Gualtier, as before noticed, archdeacon of Oxford, and committed to the care of Geoffrey. The translation is allowed to have been executed by him with a certain purity, but with little fidelity, as many variations and additions sufficiently prove. See Hist. of Eng. Poet. Dissert. I.

From this incident of a Saxon poetical version, for the use of the people, being made so late; and also, from the Chronicle, which is entitled the *Saxon*, being itself coeval with the death of King Stephen, which it relates—those, who are learned on these subjects, have inferred, that the Saxon language, " pure and unmixed," however degraded by the Norman ascendancy, continued to be generally spoken down to the close of the twelfth century; when it began to be more blended with the Norman-French, and to assume a new character.

To me there appears more of system than of truth in this notion. The Saxon, from the time of the Norman conquest, must necessarily have experienced a gradual alteration in its phraseology and idiom. Though the conquerors and the conquered did not cordially coalesce; we must recollect, that French was the language of the prince and of his nobles, amongst whom the soil and the riches of the country were distributed. French was the language which opened the avenue to protection and favour: it would accordingly be spoken by the higher clergy; be employed on many occasions of civil intercourse; regulate the discipline and tactics of the military force; and we know that it was the language in which the new laws were written, and justice was administered. On the other hand, it is probable, that the conquerors themselves, in whatever style of haughty seclusion they may be thought to have occupied their castles, would at least maintain some intercourse with their vassals; and would often be inclined to learn the vulgar tongue, from expediency or from choice. An interchange of communication of this kind would gradually affect both tongues; but we

BOOK V. know which was finally compelled to yield the palm to its antagonists. The Saxon, which was the language of the people, triumphed over the idiom of the Conqueror; and before the middle of the thirteenth century, it is allowed, that the Norman-French, though necessarily kept alive by our connexion with the continent, surrendered its claims to general currency, after having contributed something to the copiousness or the improvement of the national speech.

But what I wish most to insist on is, that the English, which was spoken and written at this time, did not exhibit a more glaring dissimilitude from the Saxon of a preceding period, than what every language, exposed as this had been to the inroads of another tongue, must unavoidably have experienced. In truth, more than this, perhaps, none of our antiquarian writers mean to assert, though sometimes they seem to say more, and to fix on some certain epoch, when a complete change was effected, as if by a sudden revolution. "The most striking peculiarity," says a recent ingenious author *, "in the establishment of our vulgar English is, that it appears to have very suddenly superseded the pure and legitimate Saxon, from which its elements were principally derived, instead of becoming its successor, as generally has been supposed, by a slow and imperceptible process." And this he conceives to have happened about the year 1180, when the two nations, laying aside their antipathies, began to live together in amity, and to participate in a common literature and

* *Specimens of early English Poetry*, vol. II. p. 404.

language, "In 1216," he adds *, "the change may be considered as complete." This year coincides with the first of Henry III. Yet, referring to these times, Dr. Johnson says: "Hitherto, the language spoken in this island, however different in successive times, may be called Saxon; nor can it be expected, from the nature of things, gradually changing, that *any time can be assigned*, when the Saxon may be said to cease, and the English to commence."

If the reader will now turn to the volume which I have quoted, and compare together the Saxon ode *on Athelstan's victory* †, Layamon's translation ‡, which has been mentioned, of Wace's *Brut*, from Geoffrey of Monmouth, and the description of the land of *Cokaine* §, with the succeeding poems, he will be able to form an accurate judgment on the subject.

In the *ode*, which was written more than a hundred years before the Conquest, he will read the pure Saxon, unmixed with any foreign alloy; in Layamon's imitation—of a more recent date by two hundred and fifty years, and more than one hundred from the Conquest—the same language will be seen, but greatly altered, and far more intelligible to an English ear. In the description of Cokaine—a poem of the beginning of the thirteenth century, and therefore, by a few years only removed from Layamon—the Saxon language will present itself, as is

* *Specimens of early English Poetry*, vol. i. p. 76.

† Ibid. p. 14. ‡ Ibid. p. 61. § Ibid. p. 83.

BOOK V. pretended, completely rendered English, that is, the Anglo-Saxon, and Anglo-Norman will be melted down into one common tongue.

To this opinion I cannot subscribe. I see in the latter not so great a deviation from Layamon, as there is a deviation in Layamon from the *ode* on Victory; and yet the author roundly asserts, that Layamon's "phraseology does not contain a word that we must necessarily refer to a French origin, and that it may be considered as simple and unmixed, though very barbarous Saxon." It is not mixed with French; but it has evidently undergone a change, and is rapidly approaching the confines of that state, when, by the admission of a few Norman words, by which its grammatical construction is not affected, it assumes the name of English. To this I readily assent: my opinion, which is founded upon the palpable change in the language, is, that, from the time of the Conquest, if not from that of the Danish invasion, a revolution had been gradually taking place in the Saxon speech; and not that, in the space of a few years, from being simple and unmixed, it suddenly became English. "About the year 1150," observes our great lexicographer *, "the Saxon began to take a form, in which the beginning of the present English may be plainly discovered. This change seems not to have been the effect of the Norman Conquest, for very few French words are found to have been introduced in the first hundred years after it: the language must therefore have been altered by causes like those

* Introduction to his Dictionary.

which, notwithstanding the care of writers, and societies instituted to obviate them, are even now daily making innovations in every living language."

The gradations by which the Saxon was insensibly moulded into the English language, have been accurately described by Dr. Johnson; but his opinion, that the cause of these changes is inexplicable, is not so readily admitted. "The adulteration of the Saxon tongue, by a mixture of the Norman," says the doctor*, "becomes apparent; yet it is not so much altered by the admixture of new words, which might be imputed to commerce with the continent, as by changes of its own forms and terminations, for which no reason can be given." Yet as these changes in the Saxon, consist solely in the extinction of its ancient grammatical inflections, and are similar to the alterations, by which the Latin was gradually transformed into the several Romance dialects, it is suggested that they may be explained on the same principles. Be it so. But who----when he considers the thousand turns, originating in fancy, in some accidental combination, or the absolute ignorance of all rule, on which, in the progress of the darkest times, the modern languages of the greater part of Europe, were fortuitously thrown together, rather than deliberately formed---will look for steady principles? Besides, what is singularly remarkable in the early Anglo-Saxon, or English, is, that it ceased to be Saxon by an admixture, as it should seem, with the Norman, without taking from the latter more

* Introduction to his Dictionary.

BOOK V.

than a few words, and with no change in its syntax or grammatical construction. It was not so in the Romance dialects, derived from the Latin. But I must close this digression, if it be such, into which I have been insensibly led, and very briefly remark on the poetry of the several pieces, to which I referred the reader.

Its Poetry.

If we take that of the ode, which is avowedly Saxon, we shall discover in it the sudden flashes, the abrupt transitions, the obscure style, and the savage spirit, that uniformly pervaded the Runic and Celtic compositions, as far as we may rely on versions, with which the public has been entertained. The ode attests that such was the genuine character of the northern poetry, even in the tenth century, when christianity had greatly softened its original features. But, after the lapse of something more than a hundred years from the Conquest, the ancient spirit manifested a miserable degeneracy. At this time, Layamon wrote. His work, as already mentioned, is a version from the French, and the passage to which I refer, contains a description of the ceremonies and sports of king Arthur's coronation. The passage may claim some merit as descriptive of the manners of the times; but, as a composition, it is utterly void of every element of poetry. It is inferior to the French, which it professes to imitate, and much inferior to the Latin prose of Geoffrey, from which both are taken. The obscurity, which may sometimes puzzle, may, I think, be owing, not to the impassioned brevity which we observed in the ode, but to its strange orthography, which, if it were removed, we should perceive that it makes nearer approaches to the English idiom, than we have been taught to believe. The subject, I admit, is less animating than that of

the ode, and impeded by the restrictions of translation, it allows not the same room for the operations of fancy; but I would not confine my observations to this single instance, as other specimens, which are extant, might be adduced to prove how destitute our country then was of all poetical taste.

The author, whom I before quoted—though he considers this work of Layamon, as exhibiting a sample of the Saxon, at the end of the twelfth century, "still pure and unmixed, though barbarous," is disposed to allow—from the peculiarities in its orthography, that the pronunciation of the language had already undergone a considerable change; and, "that little more than the substitution of a few French words was necessary to produce the Anglo-Norman," or English tongue, strictly so denominated. It seems, therefore, in his opinion, that a change in the pronunciation, and the addition of a *few* foreign words can, at any time, furnish the necessary constituents of a new language!

If we proceed to the thirteenth century, which immediately follows, when the number of writers increased, and when the transition of the Saxon into the English language is viewed as complete, I think that we shall discover no improvement in the vein of poetry. The description of the land of Cokaine, a translation also, probably, from the French, presents us with a satire on the monastic orders, of which, notwithstanding the vivacity of the subject, there is nothing attractive in the style, nor interesting in the imagery. Take an example:

There is a well-fair abbéy,
Of white monkés, and of grey;

There beth bowers, and halls,
All of pasties beth the walls,
Of flesh, of fish, and a rich meat,
The likefullest that man may eat.
Flouren-cakes beth the shingles all
Of church, cloister, bowers, and hall.
The pinnes (pinnacles) beth fat puddings,
Rich meat to princes and kings.
All is common to young and old,
To stout and stern, meek and bold.

Advancing further into the century, we come to Robert, a monk of Gloucester, who compiled, in more than thirteen thousand rhymes, a history of England, from the days of the imaginary Brutus to his own *. Here, also, Geoffrey of Monmouth supplied the materials, as far as the subject would admit. Of this poetical history the historian of our poetry thus speaks: "This rhyming chronicle is totally destitute of art or imagination. The author has clothed the fables of Geoffrey in rhyme, which often have a more poetical air in the original. The language is full of Saxonisms." The coronation scene of Arthur, which Layamon had imitated, is here given by Robert, and should be compared with it, in order to shew the progress which the language had made. The poetry is equally cold, and rather more prosaic. "Robert of Gloucester," says Dr. Johnson, "who is placed by the critics in the thirteenth century, seems to have used a kind of intermediate diction, neither Saxon nor English; in his work, therefore, we see the transition exhibited." Proceeding in his comparison,

* Edited by Hearne.

the reader may also peruse two lyric compositions, one moral, the other amatory; neither of which will, in his estimation, enhance the value of our early English poetry *

I could speak of the French poets of the same æra, whose number is said to have been more than a hundred; but it seems unnecessary. Their language was, certainly, rather more polished; but the character of their compositions was the same. We borrowed our subjects from them. The reader also will recollect what was said on the Trouveurs and Troubadours.

The Germans, from the time of Charlemagne, had also been improving their language, chiefly by the means of the poets, called *Minnesingers;* but Latin almost universally engrossed all the departments of science. The dialect which was chiefly cultivated, and was spoken in the principal courts, was that of Suabia. In this the poets wrote and sang on such subjects as accorded with the chivalrous taste of the age. They differed not from those of France and England †.

Latin Poetry.

It is time that I now resume the subject of Latin poetry, in which, perhaps, we and our contemporaries on the continent

* He who seeks for further information may turn to many writers, among whom I recommend Warton on our poetry, Dr. Johnson's Introduction, Tyrwhitt on Chaucer, and the author of Specimens; but Warton merits particular attention: Sect. I.

† Meusel's Leitfaden, passim.

BOOK V.

will be found to have preserved, or to have acquired, a more refined and classical taste. It must be evident that the harsh and rugged dialects of many of our modern tongues, could not at once be adapted to that harmony which verse requires; but when we speak of Latin, which had never ceased to be studied and well understood, and in which so many beautiful specimens of composition were to be found, it is not easy to conceive, notwithstanding the long declension of general literature, the moment an attempt to revive it should be made, or any votary of the muses should begin to compose, that the style of versification, which all admired, would not alone be imitated. We should not expect to find the excellencies of the Augustan, or of a less perfect æra of Latinity; but we might expect, at least, some imperfect imitation or distant resemblance. This was the case in many instances.

In Italy, indeed, the historian* states, that the number of Latin poets was inconsiderable, and their merit not great; and he accounts for the paucity by observing, that the new taste for modern composition, in the Provençal and Italian tongues, had antiquated the Latin muse. The subjects which they chose, which were sometimes moral, but more often historical, were ill adapted to poetry. The selection proved the want of taste, which the execution more evidently confirmed; but the opinion seemed to be, that a certain measure of syllables constituted the whole poetic art †.

---

* Tiraboschi, t. IV. l. III. c. IV.

† See Scrip. Rer. Ital. *passim*.

In France, at the same time, William le Breton wrote the Life of Philip Augustus; and the physician of this prince, Giles de Corbeil, celebrated the virtues of pharmacy in no less than six thousand lines. He was a churchman, as all physicians then generally were. But they were both preceded and excelled, it is said, by Gualtier de Chatillon, in his *Alexandreid*, a poem in ten books, founded on the history of Quintus Curtius, and which, from the admiration it excited, soon became a familiar book in the schools*. I have not seen these poems, and many others that are mentioned, except in extracts; but I recollect, some years ago, to have read with pleasure a poem of Gunther, a German, and a Cistercian monk, on the events of the reign of Frederic Barbarossa, particularly in Liguria. He wrote also in prose, a history of the capture of Constantinople by the Latins. That he also is an historian rather than a poet, I am ready to admit; but still we find passages which are not void of animation and elegance, and our early critics are unanimous in their applause †.

When we turn to Britain, after Geoffrey Vinesauf, whom Leland panegyrizes to excess, and who, among some works in prose, wrote a metrical didactic essay or treatise, entitled, *de Nova Poetria*, we come to Joseph of Exeter, called Josephus Iscanus, and Alexander Neckham. But of Vinesauf I will first observe, that his *Essay*, which prescribes the rules of oratorial and poetical composition, and was, probably, written during

* See Hist. of Engl. Poet. Dissert. II.

† See Cave's Hist. Literar. Fabric. Bib. Lat. med. ætat. t. II.

BOOK V.

his residence at Rome, is dedicated to Innocent III., whom he thus addresses, playing on his name:

> Papa stupor mundi! si dixero Papa Nocenti,
> Acephalum nomen tribuam tibi, si caput addam,
> Hostis erit nomen metri; tibi vult similari.
> Nec nomen metro, nec vult tua maxima virtus
> Claudi mensura; nihil est quo metiar illam.
> Transit mensuras hominum. Sed divide nomen,
> Divide sic nomen. *In* præfer, et adde *Nocenti*,
> Efficiturque comes metri sic, et tua virtus
> Pluribus æquatur divisa, sed integra nulli *.

Of Joseph of Exeter, styled by Warton, "the miracle of his age in classical composition," Leland thus speaks †: "No one can be offended, if I call him the first poet of his age. His eloquence, indeed the majesty of his style, and his erudition are such, that I can never sufficiently wonder, how, among men so rude and barbarous, numbers so terse and elegant could have been formed." He lived through a great part of the thirteenth century, and was the author of two heroic poems, one on the *Trojan War*, imitated rather than translated from the Greek of Dares Phrygius; the other on the *War of Antioch*, or the third crusade under Richard. The former has been published, and with such an impression of its classical merit, as to have been supposed to be the work of the Roman, Cornelius Nepos. As far as a judgment can be formed from

---

* More may be seen, as quoted from MSS. by Selden, Præf. ad x. Scrip.

† De Scrip. Brit.

extracts, it is certainly possessed of many beauties. "The diction of this poem," says Warton*, "is generally pure, the periods round, and the numbers harmonious; and, on the whole, the structure of the versification approaches nearly to that of polished Latin poetry. The writer appears to have possessed no common command of poetical phraseology, and wanted nothing but a knowledge of the Virgilian chastity. His style is a mixture of Ovid, Statius, and Claudian, who seem then to have been the popular patterns." Speaking of the view of his second work, of which only a fragment remains, the poet elegantly addresses Baldwin, the Archbishop of Canterbury, to whom the *Trojan War* is dedicated:

Altera sacræ
Tendo fila lyræ; plectro majore canenda,
Antiochi me bella vocant: nunc dicere votum est
Christicolas acies, et nostræ signa Sibyllæ.
Quæ virtus, quæ dona crucis; nec fundit anhela
Hos mihi Cyrrha pedes, animi fidentis hiatum
Celsior e cælo venit impleturus Apollo.
Tu quoque, magne pater, nostri fiducia cæpti
Altera, et in pelago pandens mihi vela secundo,
Hoc tibi ludit opus: succedit serior ætas,
Seria succedunt aures meritura pudicas;
Si tuus in nostros candor consenserit ausus,
Non metuam culicis stimulos, fucique susurrum.

Alexander Neckham, the friend and correspondent of Peter de Blois, if fairly appreciated, should take his place rather among the general scholars than the Latin poets; though, in this line, he has left specimens of an elegant taste. His principal work is a Latin poem, in seven books, on the praise of

* Dissert. II.

BOOK V. *Divine wisdom*, in the introduction to which are those pleasing elegiac lines, in which he commemorates the innocent pleasures of his early days, which were passed among the monks of St. Alban's, where he was born and educated.

Hic locus ætatis nostræ primordia novit,
Annos felices, lætitiæque dies:
Hic locus ingens pueriles imbuit annos
Artibus, et nostræ laudis origo fuit.

We afterwards read of his visiting Italy, and, as the fashion was, of frequenting the schools of France. He returned a finished scholar, wrote on a variety of subjects, and died abbot of a convent of regular canons at Exeter, about the year 1227 *.

Introduction of Rhymes.

Judging from the abilities of the writers whom we have mentioned, we may be permitted to conclude, that some progress had been made in Latin poetry; but the subject presents, at the same time, another aspect, which is rude and uninviting. I allude to the art of *rhyming*, which was now become, by a strange perversion of taste, the standard of poetical excellence.

Whether rhymes were introduced into Latin verse by one Leo, or Leoninus, who lived in the twelfth century, or by some earlier or later writer, cannot be ascertained †. But it is certain, that this change took place when the language had ceased to be generally read; and the ear, vitiated by the rug-

* See Cave and Leland, also Hist. of Eng. Poet.

† See on this subject a curious note in Warton, Dissert. II.

ged sounds of the modern dialects, had lost all relish for the harmonious simplicity of its prosody. Metre of some sort, which has been called *rhythm*, or measured motion, was found necessary, without which no verse could be distinguished; and as this might not always be deemed sufficient to mark the measure of the line, recourse was had to *rhyme*, or to the termination of verses by a similar sound. The ear was thus flattered by a certain musical desinence; nor could it, a moment, doubt, where every verse closed. I don't pretend to determine whether the rhythm, in the change which the language has undergone, could have been equally well marked by the ancient syllabic quantity. But rhyme appears to have owed its origin to some feeling of its expediency; and it can hardly be doubted, that it was first introduced in the metrical compositions of some modern tongue. It is not probable, that it would have been first attempted in Latin, in which there was no example, and of which the prosody had been so long established.

But when rhyme had obtained admission into modern tongues, and it had acquired peculiar celebrity and general approbation in the compositions of the Trouveurs and Troubadours, we readily conceive, how eager a monkish versifier might be, to confer an ornament on the Latin language, which he had learned to admire in his own. His delicacy of perception was not such as to enable him to discriminate whether this embellishment was congenial with the dignity of the Roman idiom. And whatever might be his sensibility on this subject, he knew what was of more immediate importance to him, that the use of rhyme in his compositions would not fail

BOOK V.

to recommend them to more general notice. And when the rhyming process had begun, what was likely to circumscribe its use or set any boundary to its application? We have rhymes which conclude the verse in the various measures of composition: in others, besides this common termination, the middle of each verse is made to rhyme with its end: and in a third sort, no fewer than three rhymes enter into each verse, two within the verse itself, and one referring to the succeeding line.

Qui regis *omnia*, pelle tot *crimina*, surge, *perimus*,
Nos, Deus, *aspice*, ne sine *simplice* lumine *simus*.

Should it be said that, by the ancient Latin poets, the first in classical rank, rhymes were sometimes introduced—my answer is: that they occurred from accident, or were employed for the sake of alliteration; whereas with these poetasters they were the result of elaborate design. Toil in trifles is intellectual degradation: and how toilsome must the labour have been, when the utmost complexity of rhyming was used? Bernardus Morlanensis, a monk of these times, composed no less than three books in the triple rhyme, of which I have just furnished a specimen.

Those who have early imbibed a just taste for the classical beauties of ancient poesy, could never be brought to admire, what so much excited the commendation of our ancestors, the rhyming cadence in Latin or in Greek composition. What is it then which in modern languages has reconciled it to the ear? Not, I suspect, any peculiar harmony in the rhyme, or

aptitude in these languages to admit it; but the operation of use and habit alone. Without imputing the effect to habit, I can discover nothing in modern versification which should cause rhyme to be more grateful to the ear than in the monkish rhymes. The sounds are similar; and had no great names, within the lapse of a certain period, given currency and vogue to the former, we should probably have thought both kinds equally insipid and inharmonious. Virgil is a check to Latin rhyme: whilst the elegant productions of Pope recommend it in English; though use had previously prepared the judgment for its approbation. This theory may be controverted: but it will not be denied, that, as the rhyming art commenced in the rude infancy of our languages, it could not claim any preference from critical taste; and that it was, at least, barbarous in its origin.

Grammar and Rhetoric.

After all that has been said on the principal heads of literature, and the circumstances connected with them, it would be a loss of time to detain the reader with any account of the state of *grammar* or *rhetoric;* though some writers have made them a part of their plan*. As grammar professes to teach the first elements of language, and rhetoric to lay down the rules of composition, if I had found any thing worth recording in my general view, its place must obviously have been before, not after, the enumeration of other subjects. To these they lead the way. When so many schools and universities had been opened in all countries, professors would be ready

* See Tiraboschi Storia della Letter. Ital. t. IV. l. III. c. 5.

BOOK V.

to fill the chairs: and as Latin sunk daily more and more into a dead language, though it kept possession of the avenues to science, introductory lessons were peculiarly indispensable. But the art of writing remained imperfect; and the specimens, which I have read, of the eloquence of the age, were equally void of taste. A professor of the art thus begins his treatise: "If the high-thundering Redeemer of mankind had bestowed on me a hundred iron tongues; the sky were changed into a sheet of paper; the sea into ink; and my hand could move as rapidly as the running hare, it would not be in my power fully to explain to you the excellence of the oratorial art. But I, its lowly teacher, have drawn this little tract from the secret recesses of my mind, and strewed it over with the flowers of eloquence." A better mean, however, than what this writer could have devised, for the improvement of his art, were two translations into the Italian tongue of Cicero's treatise *De Inventione*, one by a professor of Bologna—almost the first work which had appeared in prose—the other by Brunetto Latini*.

Brunetto was a Florentine, and, according to the accounts of his biographers, a scholar who, by his various elegant attainments, contributed to illustrate the close of the thirteenth century. The Italian language was under many obligations to his taste; as was also that of France, in which country he resided many years. Speaking of a work which he composed in French, and entitled the *Treasure*, he says: "Should it

* Ut supra.

be asked, being myself an Italian, why I have chosen to write in a foreign tongue? my answer is: first, because I now am in France; and secondly, because the language of this country is more pleasing and more generally spoken than any other." To his translation of the Treatise of Cicero, he added that of some of his orations; and wrote a comment on the first. But, in the minds of all Italians, a single circumstance in the life of Brunetto, eclipses every other topic of praise. They pretend that Dante was his scholar*.

The following observations, applicable not to Italy alone, but to the other countries of Europe, may serve to terminate the subject. From the general tendency to improvement, and the means so amply supplied, greater effects might have been expected than those which we have seen. As yet we had no elegant writers; but progress had been made. Some knowledge of ancient models was acquired; which were soon likely to lead to a closer imitation. The Latin language, as written by them, was less rude; and the modern tongues were evidently advanced. General science meanwhile took a wider range; discoveries in philosophy were made; the powers of intellect were exercised; and the arts, particularly the art of architecture, exhibited, in the construction of churches, many celebrated specimens. Painting also was revived under the hand of the Florentine Cimabue. The fourteenth century opened †.

---

* Ut supra.

† See Storia della Lett. Ital. t. IV. Also Vasari. Vitre de Pittori. t. I.

BOOK VI.

STATE OF LEARNING FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY, TO THE INVENTION OF THE ART OF *PRINTING*, ABOUT THE YEAR 1450.

THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY—THE POET DANTE—STATE OF ITALY—PETRARCA—HIS RESEARCHES AFTER THE WORKS OF THE ANCIENTS—CHARACTER OF HIS WRITINGS—BOCCACCIO—COLUCCIO SALUTATO—THE LEARNING OF OTHER COUNTRIES—DUNS SCOTUS—JOHN WICKLIFF—GEOFFREY CHAUCER—HIS ACQUIREMENTS COMPARED WITH THOSE OF OTHERS—AND HIS SUCCESS WITH THAT OF PETRARCA AND BOCCACCIO—FRENCH LITERATURE—FROISSARD—SPANISH AND GERMAN: WHY STATIONARY—*FIFTEENTH CENTURY*: GENERAL VIEW OF ITALY—COUNCIL OF CONSTANCE—MARTIN V.—COUNCILS OF BASIL AND FLORENCE—NICHOLAS V.—THE ENTHUSIASM OF MANY ITALIANS IN QUEST OF LATIN AUTHORS—PROGRESS OF THE GREEK LANGUAGE—CARDINAL BESSARION—VARIOUS PROFESSORS—GREEK WORKS—GIANOZZI MANETTI—CULTIVATED STATE OF THE LATIN LANGUAGE—STATE OF OTHER COUNTRIES—OXFORD AND CAMBRIDGE—ANTIQUARIAN RESEARCHES—WHAT OBSTACLES STILL REMAINED—THE ART OF PRINTING DISCOVERED.

BOOK VI. The Fourteenth Century.

AS Italy, before many years shall be elapsed, will be the country, where a just taste for elegant literature will first appear, I might now, perhaps, be allowed to pursue a different course—and leaving the philosophers, the historians, the

poets, and the general scholars of other regions---confine my researches to that more productive soil. But, though I am aware, compared with the rapid progress of the intellect, and the language of Italy, how little interest there is in every other view, and how much delay there is in every step towards improvement, something may yet present itself which should not be left unnoticed, or which, if not recorded, would cause a chasm in the general subject. The condition of other countries must not, therefore, be wholly neglected, though it may afford little which is new. We have seen that the method of philosophising was fixed, as were the other academic exercises, whether in colleges, or schools, or other seminaries; the modern languages, and the studies connected with them, were alone progressive.

The Poet Dante.

Dante degli Alighieri was now advancing to the zenith of his literary glory. He was born at Florence in the year 1265; where he studied, as well as in other cities of Italy, collecting from all quarters, and even, it is said, from the universities of Paris and Oxford, whatever was deemed most excellent in philosophy, theology, and the liberal arts. On his return to his own city, he was employed in many honourable offices. The cultivation of the Italian tongue, which was yet rude and inharmonious---but which the muses were now about to adopt as their own---had deeply engaged his attention. Thus was Dante occupied; when in 1302, in one of those civil commotions, to which the free cities of Italy were, at this time, daily exposed, the party, which he had espoused, was vanquished by its antagonists, and he was himself forced into exile. To Florence he never returned; but

BOOK VI. the cities of Italy continued to afford him an asylum; the regrets of banishment which he felt with the keenest severity, did not however suspend his literary ardour. He died at Ravenna in 1321.

The works of Dante, on various subjects, in prose and verse, some of which were composed in Italian, and others in Latin, may be considered as almost absorbed in the renown of that to which his admiring countrymen have affixed the lofty title of the *Divina Commedia*. They, indeed, can be the only judges of its merit. At what period of the poet's life, or where it was written, or begun to be written, is uncertain; and the cities of Italy contend as eagerly for the honour of each canto, as those of Greece once did for that of Homer's nativity. The poem, as every scholar knows, contains the description of a vision, in which, with Virgil, sometimes, for his guide, the poet is conducted through hell, and purgatory, and paradise, and indulged with the sight and conversation of various persons. It is evident that the sixth book of the Æneis suggested the general outline, and however inferior the modern poet of Italy may be thought to his great prototype, it is with peculiar pleasure we peruse the following lines, which at once shew, that the bard of Mantua, after the long lapse of ages of tasteless ignorance, had found a reader, who could admire and rival his beauties. Art thou Virgil? he asks, on his first presenting himself to his view:

Oh degli altri poeti onore, e lume,
Vagliami 'l lungo studio, e'l grande amore,
Che m'han fatto cercar lo tuo volume.

Tu se' lo mio maestro, e'l mio autore;
Tu sé solo colui, da cu' io tolsi
Lo bello stile, che m'ha fatto onore*.

The Italians allow, that this work of Dante is not a regular composition; that it abounds with wild and extravagant passages; that his images are often unnatural; that he makes Virgil utter the most absurd remarks; that some whole cantoes cannot be read with patience; that his verses are frequently unsufferably harsh, and his rhymes void of euphony; and, in one word, that his defects, which no man of common judgment will pretend to justify, are not few nor trifling. But, whatever may be the sum of his imperfections or the number of his faults, they are amply compensated, by the highest beauties:—by an imagination of the richest kind; a style, sublime, pathetic, animated; by delineations the most powerfully impressive; a tone of invective withering, irresistible, and indignant; and by passages of the most exquisite tenderness. The story of Count Ugolino and his children, than which the genius of man never produced a more pathetic picture, would alone prove, that the Muses were returned to the soil of Latium†. When it is, besides, considered, that the Italian poetry had hitherto been—merely an assemblage of rhymed phrases, on love or some moral topic, without being animated by a single spark of genius—

* Dell' Inferno, cant. I.

† Ibid. cant. XXXIII. "Perhaps the Inferno of Dante is the next composition to the Iliad, in point of originality and sublimity." Essay on the Genius, etc. of Pope, p. 266.

BOOK VI.

our admiration of Dante must be proportionally increased. Inspired, as it were, by him whose volume, he says, he had sought, and whom he calls his master, he rose to the heights of real poesy; spoke of things not within the reach of common minds; poured life into inanimate nature; and all this in a strain of language to which as yet no ear had listened*.

Among the various attractions which I have enumerated, and to which may be added the rich colouring with which the poet had the skill to invest all the arts and literature of the age, as they make their appearance in his work, I ought to state that the many living, or at that time well-known characters, whom he brought forward, and whose good and bad deeds he tells without reserve, greatly augmented the interest of his work, and rendered it a feast for the censorious or malevolent.

Scarcely had this poem seen the light, when the public mind was seized as if by a charm. Copies were multiplied, and comments written, within the course of a few years. Even chairs, with honourable stipends, were founded in Florence, Bologna, Pisa, Venice, and Piacenza; whence able professors delivered lectures on the *divina commedia*, to an admiring audience. They did not always display its beauties, nor elucidate its obscurities; but, under the mistaken conviction, that it abounded with allegories and mystic meanings, they dwelt too much on these; and thus they often

* See Storia della Let. Ital. t. VI. l. III. c. 2; also the Observations prefixed to the editions of the Poem.

occasioned darkness rather than diffused light*. But the general ardour at least evinces, what the example of a single man was able to effect, and that the groundwork of a better taste was already laid.

The State of Italy.

Divided as the Italian provinces were, particularly towards the north, into various independent little states, a spirit of rivalry prevailed, which often caused, indeed, strife and bloodshed; but which also excited a desire to excel in arts, as well as in arms; and the ambition of conquest was not always exceeded by the thirst for learning. We read, at this time, not only of Robert king of Naples, the master of an extensive territory, himself a votary of the Muses, and the munificent protector of letters; but likewise of the Scaligeri at Verona; of the Carraresi at Padua; of the Estensi at Ferrara; of the Visconti at Milan; of the Gonzaghi at Mantua; and of other princes and chiefs of noble houses, who expended their wealth on the interests of literature, and lavished their favours on its professors. "I know not," says the historian†, "whether, in any former age, so many and such splendid instances of patronage could be found." Even private individuals vied with their superiors. New schools and new universities were established; while those which had been already founded—though sometimes disturbed by contending factions, and agitated by the din of arms—were

* See Storia della Let. Ital. t. VI. l. III. c. 2; also the Observations prefixed to the editions of the poem.

† Storia della Let. Ital. t. V. l. I. c. 2.

BOOK VI. honoured with fresh privileges and other marks of favour and distinction.

The mind reposes with delight upon a prospect which opens with so many objects of interest; but it is soon led to inquire what at this time was the state of Rome, and how her bishops were employed, while the princes of Italy, whose names have been mentioned, contended for an honourable superiority in the patronage of letters. Rome had remained a prey to repeated outrages and tumults; and, in 1309, Clement V., a Frenchman, who had been lately raised to the chair, transferred his seat to Avignon. What the Italians have emphatically styled the seventy years of Babylonish captivity, now commenced; and from the expression alone we may infer, how fatal this absence of the Popes from their capital was to the general interests of Rome, and to none more than to those of literature and science. Discord prevailed within the walls; the pursuits of peace were neglected; and the blood of her citizens was often spilt*.

Petrarca. Contemporary with Dante, in the different departments of learning, were men of no mean acquirements, whose names and works are recorded†: but neither on them nor their works do the Italian writers love to dwell, only as they may seem to be connected with, or to introduce him, to whose literary exertions their own country, and through it the whole western world, became deeply indebted. It will here be obvious to

* Annal. d'Ital. passim. † Storia della Let. Ital. t. v. vi.

every reader at all versed in literary history, that I am alluding to Francis Petrarca, that diligent and laborious collector of the works of the ancients, who rescued his country's name from obscurity, and rendered it the admiration of Europe; who sought the society of learned foreigners, and was among the first to promote the cultivation of the Greek tongue; who, himself a philosopher, historian, orator, poet, and philologist, encouraged, by his example, every liberal pursuit. He was courted by the princes of the age, and he obtained for science and its professors their patronage and regard. The envied excellence to which he raised the poetry of Italy—while the best specimens of the art in other countries had a rude and barbarous appearance, constitute the basis of his highest praise; but it is contended, that if he never had written a verse, Italy must still have viewed him, as an object of her warmest admiration. It is said that in some of the departments of literature, a more learned scholar might be found; but we can nowhere discover an individual, to whom more justly belongs the title, of the restorer and father of Italian literature*.

Petrarca was born in Arezzo, a city of Tuscany, in 1304, and, when no more than nine years old, was taken to Avignon, which had now become the residence of the Roman bishops; in which situation, and in the neighbouring town of Carpentras, he completed the usual course of studies, comprising grammar, rhetoric, and dialectics. He applied to

* Storia della Let. Ital. t. vi. l. iii. c. 2.

BOOK VI. civil jurisprudence in Montpellier, and also in Bologna; the jejune study of which, however---though he professed to admire it, as connected with the noble antiquities of Rome---was often interrupted by the perusal of the works of Cicero or of Virgil. He returned to Avignon in his twenty-second year. At this time he lost his parents, and was rather distressed in his circumstances, when in conjunction with his brother, he put on the clerical habit; and finding powerful protectors in the illustrious house of Colonna, was enabled, by their kindness, to indulge his favourite pursuits, whether of vanity, of literature, or of love. The object of his passion was the celebrated Laura, whom he saw for the first time in 1327, the year after his return to Avignon. The affectionate attachment of Petrarca to Laura has been immortalized by the many beautiful sonnets, which it caused him to write, by which his countrymen have never ceased to be enraptured, and which have operated as a sort of seductive charm in all countries in which the Italian language is read. These sonnets added greatly to the polish, elegance, and harmony of the language of Italy; which was almost instantaneously matured into perfection, whilst the vernacular tongues of other nations were still awkward in structure and dissonant in sound. In order to mitigate his vexations or to dissipate his regrets, and to improve his mind by the view of different objects, and by the conversation of the learned, he now travelled through France and some parts of Germany. He afterwards visited Rome, which to him was a scene of sublime contemplations; and when his troubled thoughts could still find no repose, he retired, in 1337, to Vaucluse. Many of his works, in Latin and Italian, in verse and prose, were

written, in this delightful solitude; and here he began his poem, entitled *Africa*, or the Achievements of Scipio Africanus, which was not completed till a much later period.

The taste for poetry and elegant composition—for which the public mind had been prepared by the writings of Dante—ascended to a pitch of enthusiastic admiration, when the works of Petrarca appeared. Their style, and particularly that of his Latin compositions, was far removed from classical perfection; but men judged by comparison; and compared with the low standard of his predecessors, the hermit of Vaucluse seemed to them something more than mortal. He was complimented by the Mæcenas of the age, Robert king of Naples; and, by a singular coincidence, received letters on the same day, from the Roman senate, and the university of Paris, in which he was earnestly solicited to honour their cities with his presence, that they might present him with the crown of laurel, which his literary labours had so justly merited. This ceremony had been formerly practised in Greece, and afterwards in the Capitoline games at Rome; but as the literary spirit became torpid, it fell into disuse. The poet embraced the invitation with rapturous promptitude; and though he might appear for a short time to hesitate, it was plain, what his choice would be. He had looked with ardent solicitude to the revival of Roman greatness; with which, as a first step, he might perhaps connect his coronation in the Capitol! He resolved to repair to Rome: but that the distinguished honour might seem a well-earned tribute to merit, he first visited the Neapolitan monarch; conversed with him on subjects of literature; inspired him with a higher ardour in their pursuit; and, in his presence and in that of

BOOK VI.

his court, submitted, during three days, to a public examination. From Naples he proceeded to Rome; where he was crowned on Easter day, in the year 1341, with those ceremonious solemnities which his historians have minutely detailed.

This ceremony was not entirely without its effects upon the interests of literature. By contributing to excite a vivid recollection of former days, it led the mind to inquire the persons who had thus been previously honoured; when they found that the honour had been conferred not only on victorious commanders of armies, but on those who, in the retired walks of life, had acquired renown by intellectual exertion. It seemed to indicate that the spirit of those times was returning; that the gates of the Roman Capitol were thrown open to a private votary of the Muses; and that the crown of Petrarca, with all its attendant applause, might be the reward of every citizen who should successfully emulate his literary fame.

After quitting Rome, the poet spent some months at Parma, the lords of which city were his particular admirers: when he once more returned to the banks of the Rhone. In 1343, we again find him at Naples, and subsequently at Parma, and in other cities of Italy, where he contributed by his conversation and his writings, to disperse the seeds of science, and to promote their vigorous cultivation. When he revisited France, it was the end of the year 1345. Clement VI. at this time filled the papal chair, who himself was among the admirers of the poet. The year 1347 was remarkable for the wild attempt of Rienzo to restore liberty to Rome. Petrarca contemplated

this rash enterprize as the deed of a hero, from which he augured the return of an auspicious and splendid æra: but a very different event soon blasted these florid hopes. In the following year, whilst he was again in Italy, the fatal pestilence began to ravage Europe, of which Laura died.

Petrarca was fond of retirement, from his fondness for study: but a certain restlessness, the effect of a peculiar temperament, which the urgeney of his numerous friends to enjoy his society greatly augmented, did not permit him to fix his residence for any long time in one particular place. And hence, general literature was benefited. From this period, he sometimes passed months, or years in the society of the Italian sovereigns; whilst books, and extensive correspondence, happily divided his hours. In 1351, he was, for the last time, at Avignon, which he quitted, after two years, little pleased with the new Pontiff Innocent VI. who is said to have feared that he discovered the busy agency of Satan in the energy of the poet's mind! Milan and its lords, the noble family of Visconti, now received him; among whom the contest was who should shew him the most signal marks of favour. Here and at Mantua he had an interview with the Emperor Charles IV. with whom he corresponded, who was equally devoted to him; and from whose arrival in Italy, the poet had vainly anticipated the prospect of high glories to his country. Soon after this disappointment he withdrew to Linterno, a retired villa not far from Milan.

Petrarca has himself described the life which he led in this spot; and the state of his mind at the time. "Like a weary traveller," he says, "who discovers the end of his journey, I

BOOK VI.

now redouble my steps. Day and night I read and write, and by these alternate changes relieve my labour. Such are my occupations; such my only pleasures." He mentions the number of his friends; the estimation in which he is held by persons, who had never seen him; and the strong attachment which he feels for the houses, the soil, the walls, even for the air of Milan, between which city and his rural retirement he passed his days. Some years, dear to himself and to Galeazzo Visconti, thus flowed on in a gentle stream; when, in 1360, he was deputed by his patron to congratulate the French king, John, on his release from captivity in England. His reception at Paris was highly flattering; and no less flattering continued to be the repeated marks of attention, which were manifested towards him by the Emperor Charles. He would willingly have attached the poet to his court.

Padua, of which the Carraresi were lords, now became his principal place of residence, though his natural restlessness sometimes disposed him to rove; whilst, at other times, he yielded to the entreaties of his friends. We find him in Venice, honoured by the doge, and the principal citizens; and we behold him oftener in Pavia, which was subject to Galeazzo Visconti. It is thought, that an eloquent and pathetic letter, which he wrote to the Pontiff Urban IV. in the warmth of his heart for the prosperity of Italy, had some effect in inducing the latter to return to Rome. He returned, at all events, in 1367. Urban was a lover of science: he admired Petrarca, and gave proofs of his munificence in the promotion of letters. The joy of the poet was unbounded: and, in obedience to the call of the pontiff, he had set out to visit him, when sickness compelled him to return to Padua.

This was in 1370. The four remaining years of his life he spent, without much interruption, in retirement near the city; and in the morning of the 18th of July, 1374, he was found dead in his library, with his head resting on a book *.

In this brief sketch of the life of Petrarca, the reader will remark his singular ardour in the prosecution of letters; as well as his endeavours to excite a similar feeling in the breasts of his contemporaries. It will at the same time be noticed that he had many and powerful protectors. Hence he will be prepared to contemplate, more at his leisure, some other effects, and the results of other measures, which are still wanting, to prove the truth of my general statement: that to Petrarca was due the restoration of letters to Italy, and through Italy to the other realms of Europe.

His Researches after the Works of the Ancients.

It is asserted that the monks had for ages been assiduously engaged in the meritorious work of transcription; and yet the libraries of Italy, and therefore of Europe, had little to shew, besides some works of the fathers, of ancient and modern theologians, of ecclesiastical and civil jurisprudence, of medicine, astrology, and philosophy, and even these in no abundance. The names of the classical writers were barely retained; their productions and the times in which they lived were miserably confounded; and the authenticity of authors not unfrequently disregarded. Bitter complaints have reached

* I have followed in this brief narration the *Memoires sur la Vie de Petrarque*, by de Sade, published in three vols. in 1764 and 1767, and the *Storia della Lett. Ital.* by Tiraboschi, t. v. vi.

BOOK VII

us of the gross ignorance and extreme carelessness of transcribers. "It would be well," says Petrarca*, speaking of those of his own times; "would they, in any manner, write what is put into their hands: we should witness, indeed, their ignorance, but we should possess the substance of the work. But they, regardless of originals, and copies, and dictation, scribble any thing at random. Were Cicero, or Livy, or any ancient writer to rise from the grave, he would not recognize his own works. It is not so with carpenters and similar artificers. The fault, however, may be said to rest principally with those, who employ such men. When Constantine directed books to be transcribed, he ordered Eusebius of Cesarea to employ able and experienced writers."

In this dearth of accurate copies, and even of the valuable works of many ancient authors, Petrarca turned his mind to the most useful enquiries. He saw, that his own efforts would be useless without recalling into general notice the true models of taste: he owned that, on this subject, he was animated by a real passion, the force of which he had no desire to check; and, communicating his wishes to his friends, he entreated them to join their researches to his own, and to ransack the archives of libraries. "Often," says he†, "do I find myself disappointed; but I continue my labour, so pleasing are the prospects of hope. Waiting for further discoveries, let us be satisfied with what we have in our hands, and moderate the avidity of learning by the reflection, that ourselves are mortal."

---

* De Remed. utriusque fortunæ, l. i. dialog. XLIII.

† Senil. l. III. ep. 9. Famil. l. III. ep. 18.

His researches were not very successful. Three decades of Livy, the first, third, and fourth, were, at that time, all which could be found. The second decade was sought in vain. A valuable work of Varro, and other productions which he had seen in his youth, were irrecoverably lost. With Quintilian he was more fortunate; though the copy which he discovered, was mutilated and imperfect. In his enthusiastic regard for the Roman name, and in order that he might seem to enjoy the intercourse of the great men whom he most admired, Petrarca addressed letters* to some of the departed worthies of the republic, among whom Cicero may be considered as his idol†. His collection of the works of this great master was very incomplete, though his inquiries respecting them were incessant; and he had the happiness to make some new discoveries, particularly of his familiar *Epistles*. "On many occasions," he enthusiastically observes‡, "when I met strangers, and they asked, What I desired from their country? Nothing, I replied, but the works of Cicero. And frequently was this request repeated; when I sent money not into Italy only, where I was best known, but into France, and Germany, and Spain, and Britain, and as far as Greece. Thus I obtained some small volumes, but seldom such as I most anxiously sought . . . . . When travelling, if, at a distance I descried some ancient monastery, to it I turned my steps. Haply, thought I, I may there find what I most want." He was once possessed of Cicero's work *de Gloria;*

* Ad viros, Ill. passim. † Senil. l. xv. ep. 1. ‡ Ibid.

BOOK VI.

but he lent it to a friend, and it was irreparably lost to himself and to the world *. I ought also not to omit the mention of the strenuous assiduity, which he employed in making transcripts of ancient works, with his own hand, by which his eager thirst was allayed, and accurate copies multiplied.

To this laudable species of research, Petrarca was also diligent in his inquiries after medals, of which he formed a collection; and observations on ancient monuments. Whenever his good fortune conducted him to Rome, we may accompany him in his perambulations with singular delight, as he traces the vestiges of her former greatness, and expatiates on the names of her heroes, and the events of her history †. In this history he appears to have been well-read. When he beheld the precious relics of Roman magnificence neglected by indolence, or dispersed by a sordid avarice, his indignation was inflamed. "Do you not blush," he says to a Roman citizen ‡, "to draw a vile gain from that, which escaped the rapacity of your barbarous ancestors? Your columns, the ornaments of your temples, your statues, even the sepulchres, under which the venerable ashes of the dead repose, serve to embellish other cities." In another place he severely censures the ignorance of the Romans, with respect to their own sacred monuments. Nowhere he observes, is Rome so little known, as within her own walls §.

* See Storia della Let. Ital. t. I.

† Famil. l. VI. ep. 2.

‡ Hortat. ad Nic. Laurent.

§ Famil. l. VI. ep. 2.

But neither Rome, nor Roman greatness, nor the remains of Roman literature, were sufficient totally to absorb the attention of this active man. Greece also engaged his thoughts. The study of the Greek language had at no time been completely neglected; and when an occasion of learning it offered, Petrarca prosecuted it with his usual zeal. But he never wholly surmounted its difficulties; for, when a present of a Greek Homer was sent him from Constantinople, he lamented his inability to taste its beauties. His joy, however, to possess the works of this immortal bard was not less sincere. "Your present of the original text of the divine poet," he writes to his benefactor*, "is worthy of yourself and me. Yet your liberality is imperfect: with Homer you should have given me yourself; a guide, who could lead me into the fields of light, and disclose to me the wonders of the Iliad and Odyssey. For, alas! Homer is dumb, or I am deaf; nor is it in my power to enjoy the treasure which I possess. I have placed him by the side of Plato, the prince of poets near the prince of philosophers; and I glory in the sight of my illustrious guests. Of their immortal writings, whatever had been translated into the Latin idiom I had already acquired; but, if there be no profit, there is some pleasure, in beholding these venerable Greeks in their proper and national habit. I am delighted with the aspect of Homer; and as often as I embrace the silent volume, I exclaim with a sigh—illustrious bard! with what pleasure should I listen to thy song, if my sense of

* Famil. l. xi. Ep. ii.

BOOK VI. hearing were not obstructed."—He sought anxiously the acquisition of other works in the same language; and we may read a letter addressed by him to the Grecian poet, in which he mentions who, in the cities of Italy, were at this period versed in the language. The number, it seems, was not considerable: and in Rome, he says, there was not one*.

Character of his Writings.

Such was Petrarca, and such his pursuits. But it is on his Italian poetry, that his countrymen dwell in a strain of praise, which prodigality itself cannot exhaust, though the less enthusiastic among them are ready to admit its blemishes and defects. Notwithstanding the progress which Dante had made —of which, it has been said, Petrarca was sometimes jealous— the language was still in some respects so imperfect, and such was his unreserved admiration of the ancients, that it is probable he would have composed no verse except in the Latin tongue, if no Laura had interposed to divide his affections, and occasionally to be the sole occupant of his heart. In the language of Virgil he wrote his *Africa*, and some other poems; but to the ear of Laura, he was compelled to address lines, which she herself could read. This gave rise to his songs and sonnets—of which, though he himself often speaks slightingly —it is evident, that they were polished with the utmost nicety. Of them he says:

S'io avessi creduto, che si care
Fosser le voci de' sospir miei in rima,
Fatte l'aurei del sospirar mio prima
In numero piu spesse, in stil piu rare.

* See Memoires sur la Vie de Pet. t. III.

These sonnets are allowed to form the most perfect model of Italian lyric poetry. Yet, it is also admitted, that we often find in them thoughts which are ingenious rather than just; that we discover insipid allusions, and forced conceits; the defects of that vitiated taste, which the Provençal fablers had contributed to propagate; and which Petrarca did not avoid in those moments, when he suffered fashion to take the precedence. It has been said, that he borrowed from that tribe of poetasters. The historian replies, that what he took from them does him the least honour, as it was from them that he borrowed his false refinements, metaphysical conceptions, and unnatural sentiments. This, moreover, is certain: that after the Muse of Petrarca had excited public attention, the Troubadours, with their language, their songs, and their poetry, were no more heard of, at least in Italy. When, then, the state of other languages and the circumstances of the times are duly considered, how surprising is the degree in which Petrarca contributed towards the revival of letters!

Having observed, that it was from his free intercourse with the learned and polished men in the court of Avignon (and the cities of Italy), that the poet had formed his language; and warmly extolled the beautiful richness of his lyric compositions, which almost alone merit, he says, like those of Horace, to be committed to memory, Denina * adds: "That the style of Petrarca, after the lapse of four hundred years,

* Vicende della Lett. t. 1. c. 12.

BOOK VI. is still followed as the most perfect model of writing; and that hardly a word in those compositions will be found, which is become obsolete or antiquated."

It is generally agreed, that his Latin style is less perfect than his Italian, whether his poetry or his prose be considered. Yet it was for his *Africa*, principally a Latin poem, that he was solemnly crowned in the Roman capitol.

It is then, it seems, a work of less difficulty, to bring to a certain degree of maturity, a living language, which has emerged from barbarism; than to restore one which had fallen into decay and ceased to be spoken. Experience has uniformly confirmed the truth of this observation. Petrarca was devoted to the writers of ancient Rome, and he read them assiduously; yet, with the exception of some passages, his efforts will not bear a comparison with their's. But he rescued their works from oblivion, pointed to their excellencies, and gave a vigorous impulse to the public mind in their favour. This was praise enough *. Of his Latin productions, however, though now preserved, perhaps, from oblivion, and buoyed up by the Italian Muse, it may, I think, with truth be said: that, by perpetual references to the polished writers of antiquity, with which they abound, and the praises lavished on them, they contributed more than any other cause to excite and to diffuse a better taste.

* See on this interesting subject, *Storia della Lett. Italiana*, t. IV. also *Memoires sur la Vie de Petrarque*, vol. III.

Nine years younger than Petrarca was John Boccaccio, by us absurdly called Boccace, who was united to him by friendship; who laboured with him in the same honourable career of letters; and with him was entitled, from Italy and from Europe, to an almost equal portion of praise. He also was born in Tuscany. He studied under the best masters; and from them, and from the conversation of other learned men, and from what might now be esteemed a national propensity, he had begun—even long before he became personally acquainted with Petrarca—to peruse the works of the ancients; to collect and multiply copies; to imbibe their taste; and to transfuse their beauties into the idiom of his native tongue. If the poetry of Italy owed so much to Petrarca, the Tuscan prose was not less indebted to Boccaccio. He served his country in many honourable embassies, both in and out of Italy; and those employments were rendered subservient to his own improvement, and to the general interests of elegant literature.

The friendship between Boccaccio and Petrarca commenced about the year 1350; from which time it continued uninterrupted, and is proved by their correspondence to have been productive of many advantages to both. Their minds, their views, their wants, their pursuits, were communicated with mutual confidence and unreserve. Boccaccio was warmly encouraged by Petrarca to persevere in his search after classical treasures; and, as his pecuniary means were slender, he devoted much time to the irksome labour of transcription. His collection of Latin authors thus became considerable: and in the study of the Greek language he was more successful than his friend.

BOOK VI.

In 1360, Leo, or Leontius Pilatus, as he is more generally called, being on his way from the East to Avignon, was detained at Florence by the advice and hospitality of Boccaccio, who lodged the stranger in his house. It is not agreed whether he was a native of Greece, or of Calabria—in which latter country the language of its ancient inhabitants had never been wholly lost.—But whether he were a Greek or not by birth, he was a perfect master of its tongue and of its literature; and we may conceive, with what rapture Boccaccio would seize the golden occasion of providing instruction for himself; and, perhaps, of extending the same benefit to his countrymen. With this view, having prevailed on Leontius to accede to his wishes, he proposed to the magistrates to elect him a member of their academy, and to settle on him an annual stipend. With some difficulty Leontius was brought to assent to this proposal; when he publicly opened the first Greek chair, which had been seen in the west, and delivered lectures on the immortal works of Homer. "I was the first person," says Boccaccio, speaking triumphantly of the event *, "who assisted privately at his lectures, and who caused them to be publicly delivered." Yet the appearance of the Greek teacher was disgusting. He was clothed, says his disciple †, in the mantle of a philosopher, or a mendicant; his countenance was hideous; his face overshadowed with black hair; his beard long and uncombed; his deportment rustic; his temper gloomy and inconstant; nor could

* De Geneal. Deorum. l. xv. c. 7. † Ibid.

he grace his discourse with the ornaments, or even the perspicuity, of Latin elocution. But his mind was stored with a treasure of Greek learning; history and fable, philosophy and grammar, were alike at his command. During three years, Boccaccio attended his lectures; from his dictation he transcribed a literal prose version of the Iliad and Odyssey; and from his general instructions collected other materials, which he copied into some treatises, which were afterwards published by himself.

The inconstant man now resolved to return to the East; and no entreaties could detain him. At Venice he saw Petrarca, with whom he spent some weeks; and when he departed, the poet presented him with a copy of Terence. "With this author," said he*, "I observed that he was greatly amused, though I could not see what there could be in common between the gloomy Greek and the sprightly African." But scarcely had he reached Constantinople, than he again sighed for the pleasures of Italy, and wrote a letter to Petrarca, "more prolix and not less entangled than his own shaggy beard;" in which he praised, as a celestial paradise, the country which he had so often cursed, and cursed that (Greece) which he had been so often heard to praise. His Italian friends were deaf to his importunity: "for me," observed Petrarca, in another letter †, "he shall remain in misery, where he was carried by his insolence." Notwithstanding this, Leontius embarked, relying upon their partiality, and more, perhaps, upon their

* Semil. l. III. ep. VI. † Ibid. l. IV. ep. IV.

BOOK VI. love of letters; but, as he approached the shores of Italy, the ship was assailed by a tempest, and the unfortunate teacher, who, like Ulysses, had lashed himself to the mast, was stricken dead by a flash of lightning. Whilst Petrarca lamented his disaster, he expressed much anxiety to learn, whether some copy of Euripides or Sophocles might not be recovered from the hands of the mariners*.

Boccaccio is the author of many works, on a variety of subjects, in Latin and Italian, and both in prose and in verse. His Latin is not elegant, and his poetry will not endure a comparison, in either language, with that of Petrarca. At the time, whatever fell from his pen was admired; but it was the *Decameron*, a collection of a hundred novels of pleasantry and love, which formed the eternal basis of his fame. It is, however, disgraced by irreligion, and polluted by obscenity; on which account, it is said, that he never dared submit it to the severer judgment of his friend. He is said to have deplored the evil when it could not be remedied. This work has experienced numberless editions, translations, and imitations. Its style, say the Italians†, in point of elegance and choice of language, its easy and natural narration, and the eloquence of its dialogue, place it amongst the most perfect models of Italian composition. It cannot easily be determined from what quarter the subjects of these novels were derived. Some Italians pretend, that they were founded on real incidents,

* Senil. l. VI. ep. I.

† Storia della Lett. Ital. t. VI. l. III. Denina t. I. c. XIII.

which were occasionally altered, and always embellished, by the writer; while the French contend, that he was indebted to their Trouveurs and Troubadours. This may be; but the copy greatly surpassed the originals; and the Decameron soon became the general store-house, from which men of all countries unsparingly drew, as they were wanted, light and amusive subjects. It may also be remarked, that the manners of the age are depicted in the Decameron, not only in those characters which the fancy of the writer has introduced, but in many traits of real history.

Boccaccio was called in 1373, to read lectures on the *Divine Comedy* of Dante, in Florence; for which a chair had been just instituted, and an annual salary appointed. His comments on the poet were afterward published; and he was engaged in this office, and in the general prosecution of his studies, when he died, in 1375, one year after the demise of Petrarca *.

When, in one succinct view, we comprehend the labours and achievements of these two scholars; observing that one raised the language of Italian poetry, the other that of Italian prose, to a degree of perfection, which has not since been surpassed; that they both wrote many Latin works, not classically elegant, but replete with much curious information, and interspersed with quotations from, and references to, ancient authors; that they rescued some copies of these authors from

* See the works last quoted.

BOOK VI.

oblivion, procured the transcription of others, and imparted to all the charm of renovated celebrity; that to their example was owing the study, which now commenced, of the language of Greece, and the knowledge of her poets, her historians, and her philosophers; that—having done all that men could do in the arduous circumstances in which they were placed—they left behind them other scholars, not their equals, indeed, in talents, but alike desirous to prosecute the work which had thus far been happily accomplished:—When, I say, these things are duly considered, we must with joy confess, that the dark æra of ignorance, which had so long oppressed the western world, was fast retiring from the confines of Italy. Indeed, it may be said, that literature had there been revived.

Coluccio Salutato.

Amongst many others who knew Petrarca, whom he loved, and who, after his death, continued to cultivate the various branches of polite learning, was another Tuscan, named Coluccio Salutato, of whose extensive accomplishments much is related. He was chancellor of the republic of Florence, the friend and patron of learning, the author of many books, and, like his two great predecessors, an admirer and collector of the works of antiquity. Aware also, like them, of the injury which had been done to letters by the ignorance, or the negligence of transcribers, he proposed, as a check to the evil, that public libraries should be every-where formed; the superintendence of which should be given to men of learning, whose care it must be to collate the manuscripts entrusted to them, and ascertain the most correct readings. To this labour, and to the detection of counterfeit works—of which, as might well be expected, many, from various motives, were circulated—Coluccio likewise devoted some portion of his own studies.

Though he was acquainted with all the branches of learning, yet he chiefly excelled in poetry and eloquence; and hence his eulogists did not hesitate to compare him with Cicero and Virgil. A contemporary writer, speaking of the harmony of his style, and meaning to compliment him, observed that he might justly be called the *ape of Cicero.* Modern writers do not yield their assent to this extravagance of praise; but they admit that he surpassed most of his contemporaries in energy of expression; that his general erudition was vast; and that his letters and other works prove that he had perused the volumes of the ancients with discriminating solicitude. Coluccio lived to see some years of the following century, uninterruptedly enjoying the esteem of his countrymen, which he employed in diffusing and invigorating the love of letters, and in inspiring a taste for the elegant arts. The laurel which had decorated the brows of Petrarca, seemed to be due also to the Latin muse of Coluccio; but, during his life-time, the honour, though intended, was from some unknown cause never conferred. But it was bestowed after his death. As he lay on his bier, surrounded by the people, the magistrates approached, and placed a wreath of laurel * on the corpse.

Coluccio then, had continued the labours of his immediate predecessors, with a success inferior only to theirs: and were it required from me—in each department of learning, whether in Tuscany, the nursery of reviving letters, or in the other provinces of Italy—to mention other names, I could readily, from

---

* See Storia della Lett. Ital. t. v. *passim;* also Memoirs sur la Vie de Petrarque.

BOOK VI.

the records before me, produce an honourable and an ample list. But enough, I think, has been said; for when an impulse, such as we have beheld, extensive in its effects, and forcible in its agency, had been given, no power, if any had made the attempt, could well have arrested its progress. The art of *printing* was alone wanting, without which, as must be obvious, the means of general improvement would be tardy and confined; but as the dearth of books, in the augmented ardour for instruction, was daily more poignantly felt, the inventive faculties of man, which are ever most active where the pressure of penury is most felt, must soon be crowned with success. In the meantime, it seems certain, that Italy was most rich in classical treasures, to which strangers had often recourse; and as, after the time of Petrarca, the taste for books increased, they became, as in early times, an article of luxury, with which the houses of the opulent were ambitiously decorated *.

The Learning of other Countries.

Need I speak of the scholars of other countries? They could not be unacquainted with what was doing, or had been done in Italy; for many had seen Petrarca at Avignon, which was, at that time, the centre of general intercourse; others corresponded with him; and, from the continued interchange of studies, which has been mentioned, between Bologna, Paris, and Oxford, a channel of communication universally prevailed. These studies, indeed, which have been described, whether of law, of philosophy, or theology, might not be

* Storia della Letter. Ital. t. v. passim.

deemed favourable to the growth of classical taste; though a taste of that kind might still be found amongst their votaries: whilst the mere exercise of intellect, however jejune or abstruse its pursuits, was in itself a fortunate event. But I was speaking only of the intercourse, which the community of the studious maintained in Europe.

Whether we consider the improved state of its language, the cultivation given to that of Greece, or the many liberal objects of its inquiries, it must be owned, that Italy had now left the other nations of Europe far behind it. Its theologians and philosophers, addicted to scholasticism, to which our countryman Duns Scotus had given new energy—pursued its intricate mazes with unwearied ardour; but fortunately, the minds of many had taken another turn, which happened also fortunately before the explosion of the great schism in 1378. The dissensions, which this event every-where excited, and which continued for little less than fifty years, obstructed the progress of letters; and, in turning over the annals of the times, we meet with little, particularly out of the precincts of Italy, which can afford any rational delight.

Duns Scotus.

I mentioned Duns Scotus, of whom I shall just observe, that he lived very early in the century; that he was a friar and a man of astonishing talents; that he taught in Oxford and at Paris, where he acquired great celebrity by his multifarious learning, and the appellation of the *subtle doctor*, from his polemical acuteness. He died very prematurely at Cologne, when, according to some, he had not passed his thirty-fourth year. Of the extent and subtlety of his mental powers many

BOOK VI.

monuments are extant*; and having dared to controvert some positions of Thomas Aquinas, who was deemed the oracle of the schools, he became the founder of a new sect in philosophy, and revived, with unextinguishable ardour, the old disputes between the *Realists* and *Nominalists*. The Greeks and Persians, it has been observed, never fought against each other with more fury and rancour, than these two discordant sects. Oxford was a great theatre of their contests.

In perusing the history of this celebrated university, we are often disgusted with the recital of feuds, which were not always so harmless as those which I have just noticed. Scotus had been its ornament; but his brethren of the mendicant orders had long shewn themselves turbulent, as Paris had likewise experienced, opposing the public statutes, and availing themselves of their influence with the people, and still more of that which they possessed at the Roman court. Some charges of our honest historian are more grievous. Speaking of the state of the university, at this time, he says†: "Now flourished many teachers in the walks of theology and philosophy; but this must be understood of the talents and the learning of the age; for the science, professed by most, was made up of fallacies and follies. To the mendicant brothers was chiefly due this corruption of science, whose

* See Cave, Hist. Lit. App. per Wharton, p. 2.

† Hist et Antiq. Univer. Oxon. sub an. 1283.

study it was to introduce novel opinions, and to shake the foundation that had been laid."

Whilst I am upon this subject, I may further observe, that, notwithstanding the high reputation of Scotus, whose lectures thirty thousand pupils are said to have pressed forward to attend, the number of students, soon after this, greatly decreased. Of this various causes are assigned by the historian*. He adds, that a general inattention and carelessness ensued. The lectures were given without solicitude, the disputations were animated by no zeal; and the very language, by a perceptible change in its Latinity, could soon attest the spreading evil. "But, truly," he subjoins indignantly, "let it not be presumed, that we were without some apology. When the Roman bishops conferred our benefices and our ecclesiastical dignities on strangers, while even our most learned men spent their days without profit, or were compelled to sculk under the monkish cowl, what inducement was there to pursue studies in themselves not possessed of any charm?"

The studies, which did really possess charms, seem to have been prosecuted by few. If we may judge from his works they made no part of the acquirements of Scotus; and it does not appear that he was at all acquainted with the Greek language, though he wrote commentaries on some of the books of Aristotle. Indeed, it is not certain, that this lan-

* *Passim* et sub an. 1306.

BOOK VI.

guage was much studied in our universities. In the council of Vienna, held in 1311, a decree passed, directing the languages of the East, together with that of Greece, to be taught at Paris, Oxford, and Bologna; which may be supposed to prove, that they had been previously neglected. Nor is there any proof that they were afterwards more sedulously encouraged, at least for some years. All research was absorbed either in scholasticism, which led to fame, or in legal knowledge, which led to emoluments and honours. The latter studies, says the historian*, having given a list of names, and referring to a contemporary writer, "were marvellously fruitful, producing riches, and producing dignities. To them the whole multitude of scholars are seen to flow."

John Wickliff.

While this was the state of things—the Roman court, by an abuse of power, wasting the vital springs of the country, and the mendicant orders disturbing the peace of the university, and even that of the church and of Rome herself, by their domestic quarrels—Merton college, of which Scotus also had been a member, fostered within her walls a man, whose doctrines were soon to revolutionise the minds of many, and to shake the pillars of papal power. The man whom I mean, was John Wickliff. He came from the northern parts of the country; was educated at Oxford, where he finally became the head of Baliol; taught theology; and obtained the rectory of Lutterworth. Contemporary writers, though divided in the judgment which they formed, of the integrity

* Hist. Univer. Oxon. sub an. 1323.

and views of Wickliff, are unanimous in the praise of his vast erudition and intellectual capacity. The insolence of the mendicants first aroused his indignation: he contemplated with disgust the depraved manners of many churchmen; and the encroachments of Rome, which could be restrained by no remonstrances from his own country and from the other states of Christendom, finally served to fix his resolution. No one denies that many abuses existed under these and other heads; but, unfortunately, ardent minds are ever prone to run into extremes. Popular applause precipitated his career; the violence of persecution and the intemperance of invectives only inflamed his zeal; and the scanty means of information, supplied in an age of ignorance, did not lay before him those necessary sources, in which he might have learned, what were the discipline, the rules of conduct, the practices of better times; and that the evils, the prevalence of which he lamented, were manifest abuses which might be corrected, not deviations in principle from essential truth which needed eradication rather than reform. But still as he proceeded, notwithstanding the extravagance of some of his tenets, so disgusted were men with the irregularities which they beheld, and the grievances which they experienced, that numbers of all orders patronised the bold reformer, and persons of the highest dignity in the realm espoused his interest. Contemporary writers observed that the provinces teemed with his disciples, that his errors infected both the clergy and the laity; and that the schools of Oxford had deeply imbibed the poison. Even when papal letters, which contained injunctions on the subject, were presented to the university, we are told that the leading members "long hesitated, whether

BOOK VI. they should admit them with honour, or reject them with disgrace*."

But with the tenets, the designs, the moral character, and the fate of Wickliff, I have no concern. His works are numerous†, of which—though their subjects cannot be considered as connected with literature—it may be said, that such as were written in English, and dispersed among the people, greatly contributed to promote the progress of the English tongue. Amongst these we may justly reckon his version of the Scriptures from the Latin Vulgate. The public mind thus agitated by novelty, and the discussion of various subjects, would naturally be induced to shake off some portion of the lethargy, under which it had so long slumbered, and be stimulated to redoubled exertions. Few blessings are the portion of humanity which are free from all admixture of evil. If the faith of some was disturbed by the doctrines of Wickliff, that of others was more solidly confirmed; and the leaders of the church saw the necessity of recurring to the learning of ancient times, in order more effectually to stem the torrent of innovation. Wickliff flourished about the middle of the century, and died at Lutterworth in 1387.

The many satirical poems, written at this time, in which

---

* See Walsingham, Hist. Ang. Knyghton de event. passim; also Hist. Antiq. Oxon. Cave, Hist. Liter.

† See Append. to Cave.

the mendicant orders were principally ridiculed, owed their origin to the writings of Wickliff*.

Geoffrey Chaucer.

From the subtlety of Duns Scotus, and the controversial prowess of the rector of Lutterworth, I turn, with more satisfaction, to Geoffrey Chaucer, of whose life little is known, though his writings obtained so much celebrity. He was coeval with Wickliff, with whom, it has been said, that he studied at Oxford; that he completed his studies in the inns of court, and saw the reigns of Edward III., Richard II., and the beginning of that of Henry IV., being born in 1328, and dying in 1400, aged 72. He was much in favour with Edward III., from whom he received many tokens of regard; and the friendship of John of Gaunt accompanied him through life. It is not known on what occasion he was sent envoy to Genoa, when he became acquainted with Petrarca, whom he professes to have seen at Padua. Such a meeting, between congenial minds, would be highly gratifying to both; and we may conclude, that Chaucer availed himself of the propitious opportunity to acquire some knowledge of the language, in which the first of modern poets had written; to view the rising condition of Italian literature; and to enrich himself with the eminent productions of Petrarca and of Boccaccio. We know that he was captivated by the tales of the latter. The progress also which they and their countrymen had made in Latin composition, would not

* See Hist. of Engl. Poet. vol. I. *passim.*

pass unnoticed; and we may be permitted to think, that the comparison, which would force itself on his observation, could not be favourable to his own country; though it might serve to give a vigorous impulse to his own exertions. He was now more than forty-four years old, the age of sober resolution and of stedfast perseverance.

Sometime after this, in the last year of Edward III. Chaucer went to France, where he was entrusted with a mission of delicacy and importance. This might not be his first journey to that country; nor is it sure, that it was his last. Speaking of his residence in France, Leland says: "It is agreed, that he flourished there, having acquired a great reputation by his literary exercises, and deeply impressed on his mind the wit, the beauties, the elegances, the charms of that highly-polished tongue. His proficiency exceeded belief; and thus accomplished, he returned to the legal studies of the Temple." In consequence of these acquirements, we are told that it was his favourite occupation to make translations from foreign languages, by which his own knowledge of them became more correct, and as he transfused their beauties, he added to the polish of his own vernacular idiom. He certainly entertained a mean opinion of his native language, in which he was likely to be more confirmed by his skill in French, and still more in Italian; and from this conviction, it is doubted whether he deemed himself sufficiently qualified to undertake an original composition, before his sixtieth year.

The revival of learning in most countries, it has been justly

remarked*, appears to have owed its rise to translation. In rude periods the modes of original thinking are unknown, and the arts of original composition have not yet been studied. Writers, therefore, are chiefly and very usefully employed in importing the ideas of other languages into their own. They do not venture to think for themselves, nor do they aim at the merit of inventors, but they are laying the foundations of literature: and while they are naturalizing the knowledge of more learned ages and countries by translation, they are imperceptibly improving their own language. From French or Latin originals, Chaucer imitated or translated his *Knight's Tale*, and the *Romaunt of the Rose*, the first from Boccaccio, the second from William de Lorris; his *Troilus and Cresseide*, from various foreign materials; and his *House of Fame*, it is thought, from a Provençal composition†.

The reign of Richard II. was not equally favourable to the fortunes of Chaucer; but had he lived to see Henry IV. the son of his constant benefactor, firmly seated on the throne, he would probably have experienced the richest returns of royal favour. It is, indeed, no mean compliment to the taste of the British court, that, in a dark age, it could estimate the value of a man, whose chief excellence lay in literary acquirements; though, the duties which were imposed on him might sometimes not seem to accord with the tendencies of his genius.

---

* Hist. of Eng. Poet. vol. 1. sect. XII. † Ibid, sect. XII. XIII. XIV.

BOOK VI.

As Leland is ever immoderately lavish in his praises, I know not, that we may rely on his words, when he says of Chaucer, that he was an acute dialectician, an orator full of sweetness, a pleasant poet, a deep philosopher, an ingenious mathematician, and a holy divine. "These words announce much," he adds; "but for the truth of them I refer myself to his judgment who shall have sedulously perused his works." As a poet he has, certainly, been as immoderately extolled by others, that is, by men not very remote from his own age; who—at that period possessing nothing so good in their own language, and not able, perhaps, to compare him with the bright models of Italy, nor willing to recur to those of ancient Rome—were satisfied to pronounce an undiscriminating panegyric. I am not surprised that Chaucer should have despised the barbarism of his own tongue: but when he had resolved to make it the vehicle of his thoughts, which had been improved by so many years of domestic study and of intercourse with learned foreigners, I am really surprised, that his compositions should have been what we find them to be. What advantages were possessed by Petrarca and Boccaccio, or, at least, by Dante, which he did not enjoy? and yet, as has been observed, the two former became perfect models in their respective styles, and their predecessor had only not reached perfection; whilst, if we would speak the truth, with the exception of some passages, our Chaucer is read, not as a poet—who delights by the richness of his imagery, or the harmony of his numbers—but as a writer, who has pourtrayed with truth, the manners, customs, and habits of the age. Such, I recollect, was my own judgment, at least, when, some years ago, I was prevailed upon to peruse him.

We are told, that his sole design, in writing, was to improve his native tongue. He had seen what had been so successfully accomplished in Italy; and turning, with disgust, to the most famed compositions—whether of his contemporaries, Robert de Brunne, in his metrical English chronicle; Robert Langland, in his vision of Pierce Ploughman; his friend John Gower, in his dialogue, entitled *Confessio Amantis;* or to those which had preceded them *—it was natural, that he should feel a wish to attempt something for his country.

Before the reign of Edward III. the English language had been little spoken in the higher circles of society; and this may account for the slow progress which it had hitherto made, and for the affectation, of which writers are accused, of introducing words of Gallic origin. I cannot believe that, if the attempt had been made, the Saxon, a dialect of a language peculiarly copious, was, or would have been, found inadequate to any purposes, whether of colloquial intercourse or of literary composition. Fashion alone prescribed limits to its use, and men of science submitted to the tyranny. Even Chaucer, satisfied to walk in the same trammels, chose rather to borrow, "from the more polished languages of the Continent," than to work, mould, and levigate the rough substance which he had in his hands. Hence his diction, considered as purely English, differed little from that of other writers; and his chief excellence may be placed in the me-

* See Hist. of Eng. Poet.

chanism of his verse. This, as Dr. Johnson observes, he certainly improved by the various disposition of his rhymes, and by the admixture of different numbers, principally in the adoption of the ten-syllable, or heroic measure. Other critics, viewing the general beauty and perspicuity of his style, have ascribed them to that happy selection of appropriate expressions, which are found to distinguish every writer of original thinking and real genius. Steering a middle course between those who have praised him without moderation, and those who have censured him with unmitigated severity, the profound judge, whom I have just named, pronounces, that Chaucer "may, perhaps, with justice, be styled the first of our versifiers who wrote poetically."

His works, of which the *Canterbury Tales* form the most original portion, are in every one's hands; but I would willingly learn by how many they have been read; and particularly by how many with the feeling of delight. The licentiousness, with which Boccaccio was charged, is equally imputable to his English admirer; and the latter is said to have experienced similar compunction as he approached his end. The depraved manners of the age were a just subject of satirical reprehension; and monks, and friars, and nuns, had by some excesses rendered themselves fit objects of ridicule. But were gross descriptions and lascivious tales the proper correctives of vice and folly, if correction had been intended? And if amusement, as is plain, were the end which was sought, I do not see of what apology, their *levities*, as they are gently termed, are susceptible. The Roman satirist, indig-

nant at the view of *vice*, had a better plea for delineating the disgusting features of its depravity*.

His Acquirements compared with those of others.

Chaucer then, it seems—if his improved versification be considered, and the beauties of many passages; with those sprinklings of philosophy which embellish his works; with his knowledge of history, of mythology, and of various other subjects, as they incidentally occur—may take the first rank among our early English poets. But may we be allowed to take from him an estimate of the literature of the times, as possessed by men of *superior* education? or to assert, that we are as much indebted to him, as Italy was to her Dante, her Petrarca, and her Boccaccio?

What our education in the schools then was, which could be termed *superior*, it is not easy to ascertain, unless, in the universities, it be restricted to scholasticism, and such studies as were subservient to it; and in the classes of grammar, to such elementary instruction, as has been repeatedly described. What some men acquired more than this, was the fruit of private labour. Such was the learning of Chaucer; and he, who would consider it as the standard of the general acquirements which were possessed by those who had some claim to distinction, must be satisfied to err. The list, not inconsiderable—of more than a hundred and sixty writers of different

* See Leland *de Scrip. Brit. Hist. of English Poetry*, vol. I. Tyrwhitt, *on the Language and Versification of Chaucer; Specimens of early English Poets*, vol. I.

BOOK VI. countries, with their works, who flourished in the fourteenth century, called the *Sæculum Wicklevianum* *—sufficiently announces who they were, and what had been their pursuits. These pursuits were often laudable; and, in their sphere, they led to fame, to emoluments, and to dignities. The conventual orders absorbed by far the greater portion of those, whom the love of retirement or of study could allure; and it was theology, in all or in some one of its branches, which became their principal occupation: while the secular clergy, if they did not pass their days in indolent repose, had recourse to the study of medicine, or, as more directly leading to preferment, to that of ecclesiastical and civil jurisprudence. Elegant literature entered into none of these walks; and therefore, as I observed, they were deserted by Petrarca and Boccaccio, and I might, I believe, have said, by Chaucer, as not in unison with that line of studies, which they had determined to pursue. These men, then, almost stood alone; and instead of forming a standard, by which general taste might be estimated, they were a glaring exception, which some might admire, but which more would condemn. The remark does not accurately apply to Italy.

A further observation strikes me, which, I am surprised, did not sooner occur. One only of these illustrious scholars was a churchman; and this one was Petrarca. But he, though, in many respects, a man of singular piety, and enjoying ecclesiastical emoluments, did not bind himself to any duties,

* Hist. Lit. Append.

of the ministry; and was ever at liberty in his choice of pursuits. Hence, I think, we may be allowed to conclude: that the general studies of ecclesiastics and of monks were, at this time, adverse to polite literature; that, the men, of whom I am speaking, advanced to a certain degree of classical excellence, because, not tied by their profession, to those studies, they chose another path; and, thus drew to themselves more admiration, while the rest of the laity, without taste for any intellectual pursuit, passed their time in the menial offices of life, in the sports of the field, in the delights of the table, or in the exercise of arms. But from these causes it also happened—as the studious members of society, ecclesiastics and friars were engaged in their peculiar pursuits, and the laity felt no interest in what they little understood—that the progress towards classical improvement, must necessarily have been slow. We may, therefore, be rather surprised that so much was done.

And his Success with that of Petrarca and Boccaccio.

But how little, we may say, was done by Chaucer, and how slight are our obligations to him, when his achievements are compared with those of his Italian fellow labourers! He improved, it is said, the mechanism, and, perhaps, the harmony of verse; was the author of some beautiful lines; augmented, if he did not enrich, the English vocabulary with foreign words, imparted to his countrymen some translations from the French and the Italian; and amused them with tales: but did he communicate to others the taste for letters, which himself possessed? Did he excite any thing like a literary ardour amongst the great and the opulent? Did he go in quest of the works of classical antiquity, transcribe those works, or procure their transcription, and form them

BOOK VI.

into libraries? Was the literature of Greece as well as that of Rome an object of his attention; and did he seek with painful solicitude the means of learning the language of the former? In one word, did a new æra commence with him; or did he leave behind him a succession of scholars, who, having imbibed his spirit, pursued his steps, and soon accomplished the object of their wishes? This high praise cannot justly be ascribed to Chaucer: and the event, which I am tracing, was not owing to his exertions, but to the strong impulse given by the two Italians, which was felt in their own country, and thence gradually propagated to other regions. Chaucer himself was fortunately thrown into the sphere of that impulse, and, probably, drew from it that taste for letters, without which he would ever have remained a common man.

When we further reflect on the widely different conditions, in which the two countries were left by their respective teachers: Italy, in all her cities, actively bent on literary exertions, whilst England was hardly roused from her intellectual torpor, and then view their languages—that of England, still unpolished and barbarous; whilst that of Italy was carried to a state of absolute perfection---what must be our thoughts? As the previous circumstances were similar, must we infer that there was any superior quality in the Italian mind which caused it to receive more readily the impression of what was truly great and beautiful in the arts? The language of Italy was, in its origin, the offspring of corruption, though, by the vigorous co-operation and fostering care of the same two men, it rose to maturity; while that of England must wait the revolution of three entire centuries before its standard shall be fixed! The style of Petrarca, after the

lapse of four hundred years, is still followed as the most perfect model of writing; and hardly a word in him will be found, which is antiquated or obsolete. Compare this with the style and language of Chaucer.

I have not mentioned our historians, who, at this time, were sufficiently numerous, the principal of whom are Matthew of Westminster, Ralph Higden, and Henry Knighton, who all wrote in Latin, not with more elegance, certainly, than their predecessors; and whenever an opportunity offered, borrowed from them without reserve*. None of them exhibit any advance to greater purity of style; to more dignity in the narrative; nor to more judgment in the selection of materials.

French Literature.

And what of France? The reader must now be sensible, that no information, on the subject of letters, derived from France, or any other country, could afford him any new satisfaction. If he could be admitted into their public libraries, their schools, or the private studies of the learned, he would perceive, that no other change, either in language, in the modes of instruction, or the general progress of science, had intervened, than what the regular course of time would necessarily produce. The attention of those, who were solicitous for improvement, would often be turned towards Italy, and they might envy her rising lustre; while by far the greater number remained satisfied with their condition, and

* English Library by Nicolson: Hist. Lit. Leland.

BOOK VI.

beheld in the achievements of Duns Scotus, and the sophistry of his followers, a higher theme of praise, than could be collected from the pursuits of Petrarca or Boccaccio. In France, at least, which we may consider as treading next in the footsteps of Italy, but few inquiries seem yet to have been made after the works of ancient writers; though the love of learning continued ardent, though the schools were filled, and, during the greater portion of the century, the intercourse with the Roman court at Avignon formed a channel of general communication. I have read, that Charles V. of France, whom historians represent as a prince fond of reading, *(instruit en lettres moult suffisamment)*, and to whom a book was an acceptable present, undertook to form a library. John, his father, whom the Black Prince made prisoner at Poitiers, had left, as a royal legacy, twenty volumes to his son, which he augmented to nine hundred. Among them were books of devotion, astrology, medicine, law, history, and romance. Amongst the few classical authors, there was not a single copy of the works of Cicero; and, among the Latin poets, only Ovid, Lucan, and Boetius. To these were added some French translations: of Livy, which had been lately executed by the orders of king John; of Valerius Maximus; the City of God by St. Austin; the Holy Bible, &c. On this slender basis, we are told, was founded the celebrated library, which was afterwards called the *King's**, the principal contents of which, however, some years later, were sent into England by the regent Bedford.

* The fact is mentioned by Henault—sub an. 1380—from what document he does not say; also by Warton, Dissert. II. who quotes his authority.

If such was the royal collection; that of private men, or of public bodies, was not likely to have been so richly stored. And we must not be surprised to see books of *astrology* placed between those of devotion and of medicine. There was still a strong predilection for that fallacious science; and the same Charles V. is related to have maintained in his palace an adept in the art, whom he named his *astronomer*, and on whom he conferred many signal proofs of his regard.

Long, indeed, was the list of ecclesiastical, scholastic, and legal writers; and, when every professor seems to have committed his thoughts to paper, we have no reason to regret that the means of multiplying copies were yet so difficult. In human learning—if, for the sake of distinction, the word *human* may be used—and in the acquirement of languages some progress was made. In the latter, particularly in those of the East, Raymundus Lullus excelled, a man of an extraordinary character, who lived early in the century*.—The Trouveurs and Troubadours no longer enjoyed the same degree of popular celebrity. The latter had been eclipsed by the genuine muse of Italy; while, to the former had succeeded a somewhat more sober style of poetry. The French, from this period deduce their long chain of poets, which knows no end. Romances were also in vogue, at the head of which is placed the *Roman de la Rose*, begun, in the preceding century, by William de Lorris, and completed in this by John de Meun.

* See Dupin Bib. Eccles. Hist. Litter.

BOOK VI. This poem consists of twenty-two thousand seven hundred and thirty-four verses; and it is said that the French have nothing equal to it before the reign of Francis I.

Their language would thus be improved; and the degree of the improvement will be perceptible by comparing the compositions of the present with those of the foregoing age. It will likewise, I think, be apparent that the English language, as Chaucer thought, was less polished than that of France; which would necessarily arise from the superior cultivation of the latter amongst the great, and the more extensive channels of its intercourse. Yet, how rude is the speech of France, how defective its phraseology, how inharmonious its most chosen numbers, when placed beside those of Italy!

Froissard. The style of Froissard, the historian, may be taken as a just criterion of what was deemed most excellent in prose; and from prose to verse the transition is easy. Messire Jehan Froissard was a native of Hainaut; and when his young mistress, Philippa, married our prince Edward, he accompanied her to the English court, at which he was educated, experiencing, as he says, from every quarter, *honneur*, *amour*, *largesse et courtoisie*. I do not know the time at which he took orders; but he appears to have been little qualified for the severer duties of the state. He was naturally inquisitive, and though, by no means, versed in ancient or modern history, he amused himself in collecting facts; and few æras could have supplied either more, or more interesting, than the eventful reign of Edward III. When Philippa, to whom he had presented the first part of his *Chronicle*, from 1326, died in the year 1369,

and he was returned to his native country, he employed himself in the continuation of his history, and occasionally in lighter compositions.

It is amusing to follow him in his researches, and to watch the progress of his work, as he could add to his stock of information by conversing with those, who, in England, or France, or Scotland, or Spain, had borne any part in the transactions of the times. After the great battle of Poitiers, he says, in 1356, *ou le noble roy Jehan de France fut prins*, he had extended his inquiries; because, before that he was himself *moult jeune de sens et daage*. He again visited England; but it was after an absence of twenty-eight years; and soon after the return of Richard II. from his Irish expedition. The account which he gives of this visit, of his reception at court, of the conversations which he sought on a variety of subjects, and of his interview with the king, when he presented him with a richly ornamented volume, is peculiarly interesting. This volume he had purposely brought with him. It was fairly written, finely illuminated, and covered with red velvet and many silver ornaments, in which the historian himself seems to have displayed his manual skill. The king opened it, looked into it, and was greatly pleased: *et plaire bien luy devoit*, adds Jehan, proceeding to describe the beauties of the book. "He next asked me," continues he, "of what it treated?—of love, said I.—With this answer he was mightily delighted, looked into many places, and read, *car moult bien parloit et lisoit François*." This incident, with the accompaniment of royal favour, introduced the stranger into other society, and into that particularly of a gentleman who had lived many years in Ireland, and who, stricken by the sight of the book,

BOOK VI.

and inferring (we cannot tell why), that the owner was *ung hystorien*, accosted and presented him with a rich repast of information upon some late events, and upon the rude and savage manners of the Irish people. Froissard now continued his history to the close of the life of Richard, about which time he also died, having been, for many years, a canon and treasurer of the collegiate church of Chimay, in the diocese of Liege *.

The work which Froissard presented to the king, was, probably, a collection of the many moral and amatory pieces which he is known to have composed. He says that the grace of heaven and of love had both aided him in his labours. His fondness for romances has also been recorded. But the fame of Froissard is founded on his chronicle, which comprises a period of eighty-four years. Many have complained of the endless prolixity of its details, of his minute and tedious descriptions of battles, sieges, skirmishes, single combats, and assaults. This may be true. It may also be true, that his desultory method of procuring information rendered him often liable to error and deception, and that his narration is, on many occasions, no better than a *gossip's tale*. But, if we will be fastidious, what are other histories?

The *Chronicle* of Froissard, notwithstanding the imperfections of its style, and the prolixity of its details, awakens and preserves an interest, which is not always excited by more

* See his own Chronicle, *passim*.

polished narrations of modern or of ancient times. I will select a passage, which is written with no peculiar effort. It shall be the chapter in the first volume, in which an account is given of the interview between Edward III. and the Countess of Salisbury.—As Edward advanced, the Scots had raised the siege of a certain castle, when the king laid aside his armour, and presented himself at the gate. The Countess came out splendidly habited: every eye was struck with her beauty: she approached the king, and bowing to the ground, thanked him for the succours which he had brought, and conducted him into the castle. His eye remained fixed on her, *et bien lui estoit advis que ongues ne avoit veue si noble, si frisque, ne si belle dame.* They advanced hand in hand, first into the hall, and then into her chamber, which was magnificently decorated, as became so noble a lady. Still Edward turned not his eyes from her, when the Countess deeply blushed. He then withdrew to a window, and leaning on his elbow, *commença moult fort a penser.* In the remainder of the story, the different attempts of the Countess to draw the King to the company; her attention to the other guests, while dinner was preparing; the conversations between her and his majesty, *qui encore pensoit et musoit,* when he declared his passion, and she repelled his tender of love with a respectful dignity; and his finally being prevailed on to sit down to table, though he ate little, and still continued in thoughtful musings—all this, with a variety of little traits which give life and reality to the picture, are related with the most captivating simplicity.

Though Froissard was not a Frenchman, yet, as he was educated in courts, and lived in the politest circles, where the French language was spoken, we may deem him a perfect

BOOK VI. master of the tongue, and consider his style as a model of the best writing at that time. This model appears to have been homely, rude, and embarrassed, which will be more apparent, if we compare it with contemporary productions in the Italian tongue. Had Boccaccio described the interview between Edward and the Countess, it would have been executed in a style of classical elegance; though, as it would not have possessed the characteristic simplicity of this original, it might not have pleased us more. But here the subject itself interests; on other occasions, as we proceed through less amusing scenes, we feel, that Froissard himself was distressed by the penury and the awkwardness of a language, which, at this period, was deficient in copiousness, harmony, and appropriate nicety of expression. Such was the French language at the end of the fourteenth century; and, as was observed of that of England, three more must pass away, before it shall have attained that degree of maturity, which the language of Italy had already acquired.

Then what is it, the reader may ask, in this rude compilation of Froissard, which can give delight?—Not its simplicity and artlessness alone; for these may be found in the Latin chronicles of the age, which we read, not for the amusement which they afford, so much as for the sake of the facts, which they contain. Even were Froissard faithfully translated into any modern or ancient language, without the substraction, if it could possibly be avoided, of a single characteristic feature, he would not, I think, be perused with equal delight *. I sup-

* I have seen little of the splendid English translation, by Mr. Johnes.

pose his untutored homeliness to be left, which would then occasion disgust. Is it that we view him as we do the remains of Grecian elegance, or of Roman grandeur, or as we contemplate the ruins, clothed with moss and ivy, of churches, abbeys, or castles? Here association intervenes, operating upon the mind by a train of pleasing reminiscences; while the Chronicle in question is unmutilated and entire in every part. But we must recollect that an ingenuous candour, a grateful sense of benefits, an assiduous solicitude to please, an honest freedom from prejudice, and an unwearied searching after truth, when found in any author, as they are in Froissard, are qualities which cannot fail to command the approbation, and fix the goodwill of the reader.

Spanish and German: why stationary.

I have little to say on the state of the Spanish and German languages; for as yet nothing worthy of notice had been written in either. The former, indeed, which may be called the sister of the Italian tongue, sooner arrived to a certain degree of maturity, than the speech of France; and an impediment to its growth, while it wanted a Petrarca or a Boccaccio, might be the yet unsettled state of the kingdom.—In Germany, an undue preference to Latin, and in this preference itself an absence of taste continued to oppose a barrier to improvement.

This last fact verifies the observation which, I think, has already been made---that what, in Italy, produced the almost instantaneous revival of letters and the perfection of its tongue, was an admiration of the Latin and Greek authors, which generated taste; while, in other countries, those authors lay neglected; the language of Greece was not understood; and

BOOK VI.

the Latin of the schools was barbarous. Then what inducement was there to attempt any improvement of the vulgar tongue, of the defects of which they were so little sensible? Petrarca, when his mind was glowing from the perusal of the works of Cicero or of Virgil, felt at once the inferiority of his native speech; but he had a model before him, by which to correct and amend it. His genius surmounted obstacles; and we have seen what his success was. The less improved tastes of Chaucer and Froissard, and of Spanish and German writers, were not disgusted with the vulgar idioms of their respective countries; and therefore their progress to improvement, and from improvement to maturity, must await the slow diffusion of a better taste, that is, till the models of excellence, of which we have been speaking, shall have gained general admiration. By an untoward tendency, however, in the concerns of man, this very admiration, absorbing in itself all the energies of mind, will, for a time, as we shall see, check the effect, which in Italy it so fortunately produced, and which will finally be extended to other countries.

Fifteenth Century. General View of Italy.

I mentioned that, after the deaths of the illustrious men, who had revived the genuine literary taste in Italy, a succession was ready to start in the same career, and to accomplish what was left undone. And lo! exclaims, exultingly, the author so often quoted *, when the fifteenth century opened, all the cities, with a common ardour, were engaged in giving

* Storia della Lett. Ital. Pref. all'. t. VI.

fresh life to letters, and in calling back the arts to their long-deserted seats. Books are every-where sought; journeys are undertaken; copies are compared, corrected, multiplied; public libraries formed; and chairs for the Greek and Latin languages richly endowed, and filled by able professors, are instituted in every city. The misfortunes of Greece compel many men of ability to take refuge in Italy, where they are honourably received, and taught to forget the calamities of their country. The literary treasures of Greece were thus more fully developed in Italy; and the names of Plato and Aristotle, Demosthenes and Homer, rendered familiar to the public ear. Every man of learning becomes acquainted with their language. Numerous academies were now formed; scientific meetings held; literary disputations proposed; while medals, inscriptions, statues, were collected from every quarter; and the mind was seized with a passion for antiquity and a thirst for erudition. New lights were thrown upon philosophy and mathematics; astronomical calculations were made with more accuracy, by the help of which, navigators, from the same Italy, soon discovered another world. Medicine, jurisprudence, and every other science, advanced with the same rapid step. Princes, ministers, generals of armies, magistrates, the affluent and the great, eagerly contended for the honour of cultivating letters themselves, or of being esteemed the patrons of genius and erudition. Their courts and palaces, unless illumined by the presence of some learned man, seemed to want a necessary decoration. The elegant arts, painting, sculpture, and architecture, rose, at the same time, into life; and, to crown the felicity of the period, the art of printing was discovered in Germany, and soon carried into Italy.

BOOK VI. This is an enchanting view; nor is it embellished beyond the reality of truth, whilst it evinces what the efforts of a few men can effect in favourable circumstances. It shews, besides, when I so freely praised Petrarca and Boccaccio, that I did not exaggerate their claims to the gratitude of posterity. The glory of the fifteenth century was owing to their talents, and exertions.

But there is a dark side to almost every scene; and while the man of letters dwells on the glowing prospect which has been laid before him, the friend of humanity and of peace, on perusing the annals of the times *, sees ample cause to lament the unceasing broils by which the states of Italy continued to be harassed, and the great schism to be perpetuated. In the decline of literature, such commotions served to accelerate its fall; and on its revival, they might check, but they could not wholly suspend its progress. Perhaps, in some instances, they might generate a degree of rivalry, by which it was promoted. Having described the civil state of the country, which was torn by wars, and disturbed by the projects of ambition, the historian still observes †: "To whatever side we turn our eyes, they are sure to behold men raised, it should seem, to eminence, with no other view, than to urge forward the course of studies, and to reward the labours of the industrious." He tells us who these princes were; and recounts their honourable achievements. They were men of the same

* See Annal. d'Italia, passim.

† Storia della Letter. Ital. t. I c. II.

families which had patronised Petrarca, or who walked in their steps, in Milan, in Ferrara, in Naples, in Mantua, and in other states and cities. And let me not forget the Medici, whom not birth, but the proper use of riches, now raised to the head of the Florentine republic. The great Cosmo, styled *il padre della patria*, was, at the same time, its Mæcenas; and, under his fostering care and munificent patronage, Florence might justly be esteemed a second Athens, for its assemblage of philosophers, its literary contests, and its elegant arts. He lived through more than half the century; and on his death bequeathed to his immediate posterity that legacy of talents and of virtues, which have stamped immortality upon their names.

Council of Constance.

Rome alone did not yet conspire with the general tendencies of the other states. Divided and convulsed by the great schism, which had now lasted twenty and two years, the minds of the leading churchmen could find little relish for literary pursuits; and various means of accommodation had been tried in vain. But in 1414, the council of Constance met; and after many efforts, which were distinguished by firmness and by wisdom, it finally deposed the rival pontiffs, and raised to the chair Otho, of the illustrious house of Colonna, under the name of Martin V. Amongst the members of this council were men of eminent talents, of whom not the least celebrated, was John Gerson, the chancellor of the university of Paris, and the ambassador of the French king. In an assembly of the fathers before Sigismund, the king of the Romans, Gerson delivered an oration, the leading drift of which was to establish the superiority of general councils over the Roman bishops, and which, in the fourth session, proved the ground-work of the decree in which that doctrine was solemnly defined. It was

BOOK VI. not new to the French prelates; but that it should have been admitted by the general body of representatives, evidently proves, that they had made no small progress in the knowledge of primitive truths. The correction of abuses, in other words, the reformation of the church in its *head* and *members*, had long been the rallying cry of Europe; for the accomplishment of which this synod had been convened: but when it rose little had been done. This argued a defect of firmness, fully sensible as the council was, of the multitudinous evils which oppressed the christian world; while the death of John Huss, and of his disciple Jerom of Prague, no less clearly evinced, what were the sanguinary laws of discipline, by which the fathers of Constance were unworthily influenced *.

Martin V. Martin, fortunately or unfortunately, escaped from Constance, with his prerogative untouched; and was triumphantly received into the eternal city, the concerns of which and of the church he administered, during fourteen years. It is admitted that literature owed few obligations to his memory; but the Roman people, says the historian †, lamented his death, as if their city, and the church of God, had lost their best and only parent. To him, it is added, that church was indebted for her union, Italy for her repose, Rome for her renovation. When he entered her walls, his sight was every-where grieved by the spectacle of ruin and

* See the history of this council in any ecclesiastical author, particularly that by L'Enfant.

† Platina de Vitis Pontif. in Mart. V.

desolation: penury dwelt in her houses; filth encumbered her streets; whilst her temples were deserted and falling into decay. He was endowed, I believe, with many virtues; and to this day, the Romans, looking with reverence to his tomb, repeat the flattering inscription, which tells them, that Martin was *temporum suorum felicitas*. He was succeeded by Eugenius IV.

Councils of Basil and Florence.

The reformation, which could not be effected at Constance, was referred to another council, which met first at Pavia, and then at Sienna, under Martin, and finally, under Eugenius at Basil, in 1431. "To unite the long-divided churches of the East and West, and to reform, in its head and members, the universal body of the church," were the professed objects of the meeting; and if, at Constance, we admired the enlarged views with which its synod was animated; the same views, under the superintendence of Cardinal Julian Cesarini, prevailed at Basil, influenced by an eager and manly resolution to accomplish all the purposes, which had called them together. But we know the unsuccessful issue of their endeavours; and that, after many years of incessant contests with Eugenius, they finally suspended their deliberations in 1443; whilst the pontiff had, at the same time, held another synod at Florence, in which the wished-for union with the Greeks —but without any principle which could ensure its duration —was accomplished *.

* See the writers on Church-history.

BOOK VI.

This long series of discussion and of strife—though productive of moral evil, had some salutary influence in enlarging the understanding; in turning it to scientific inquiries; and in introducing into theology, and the questions connected with it, a more severe and critical spirit of research. This spirit tended to conduct the inquirer to the ancient sources of pure knowledge: and at Florence in particular, where many learned Greeks were present, the Latins would be compelled to admire and to emulate their erudition. Eugenius has incurred much censure by his conduct to the fathers of Basil; but his successful union of the Greeks diffused a lustre over his name; and his talents enabled him to maintain his station, and to brave the reiterated assaults of the synod. He must likewise take his place among those pontiffs, who have been deemed the patrons of letters*. Many learned men frequented his court, to whom he was a liberal benefactor; and in speaking of them, he was sometimes heard to say, that, if their talents were admired, their resentment should also be feared, as it could seldom be incurred with impunity. It was Eugenius who conferred the purple on Bessarion, the celebrated metropolitan of Nice, who at Florence had espoused the Latin creed, and attached himself to the fortunes of Rome.

Nicholas V.

The dissensions, which the council of Basil had occasioned and which Eugenius, himself a party, was not able to accom-

* Platina de Vit. Pontiff.

modate, could not long withstand the gentle spirit of his successor. This successor was Nicholas V., who to uncommon learning added a sincere love of peace; and it is with pleasure that I record the assemblage of talents and of virtues, by which he was distinguished. Born of humble parents, he owed his fortune to his industry. By the diligence which he exhibited chiefly in the schools of Bologna, he acquired reputation; secured patronage; and became intimately acquainted with many literary characters. His correspondence with these now commenced with that avidity for knowledge, and that eagerness to extend its boundaries, which marked the general progress of his life. What he could spare from his necessary expences was devoted to the purchase of books; and in the transcription and embellishment of these he was not restrained by any considerations of parsimony. Attached to the family of cardinal Albergati, he accompanied him in various embassies, and seldom returned without bringing back with him copies of such works, ancient and modern, as were not known in Italy. The titles of some of these are mentioned by his biographer *, who adds, that there was no Latin author, with whose writings he was unacquainted. This enabled him to be useful in the arrangement of many libraries which were formed at this period; and it is particularly mentioned, that he lent his assistance to the great Cosmo de' Medici. For this assistance, continues the historian, literary men were much indebted to him; and for the lustre which his labours diffused over books and their authors.

* Vespasiano. Scrip. Rer. Ital. t. xxv.

BOOK VI.

Such was the high fame of Thomas da Sarzana, embellished by signal virtues, and confirmed by great experience in the management of affairs. He was promoted, in 1444, to the See of Bologna, and soon after this made cardinal. In 1447, he succeeded to the pontifical chair; an event, which, when the character of the man, and the circumstances of the times are considered, was peculiarly auspicious to the cause of letters. The countenance of the first pastor was alone wanting to complete their triumph. I could relate the joy which was expressed, and the gratulations which were poured in from many quarters, whilst Rome saw her streets crowded by the votaries of learning, and her court become the centre of science. The first care of Nicholas, however, agreeably to the duties of his office, was, to give union to the church, and peace to Italy; after the accomplishment of which, he could direct his thoughts, undisturbed by painful recollections, to such plans as might be suggested for the promotion of letters, whilst he might enjoy the society of the learned. Among these, who at this period visited Rome, I find the names of the eminent scholars, with whom Italy abounded, all of whom were received by the pontiff with unfeigned courtesy. Some of them were raised to offices, and others experienced his munificent liberality.

The year 1450 was the celebration of the jubilee. It is known what a vast concourse there is on these occasions, from all parts of Christendom, to the holy city; and the historian observes, that no time ever witnessed a greater concourse than the present. Wealth flowed in, and the treasury was replenished. "Should I ever possess riches," Nicolas had often repeated when he was indigent, "I would expend them in

building, and in the purchase of books." The wished-for time was come; and he was true to his word. Since the popes had returned from Avignon, some works had been undertaken for the reparation of the city, which the feuds of the schism interrupted; and, after the council of Constance, Martin generously resumed the labour, which Eugenius, at intervals, continued *. With equal ardour, and with more abundant means, Nicolas now began to erect, to repair, and to beautify,

Restituit mores, mœnia, templa, domos †.

No expense was spared in the purchase of books, and where originals could not be procured, copies were directed to be made. His transcribers were every-where employed; whilst men, versed in the language and literature of Greece, were invited to translate the most useful and classical works. Poggio undertook Diodorus Siculus; Lorenzo Valla Thucydides; and Filelfo, the poems of Homer. I have named three of the first scholars of the age; and their labours were munificently rewarded. Of some of these and of other works versions had already been made; but they were barbarous and unfaithful. Strabo, Polybius, and Xenophon, with other authors, were also taught to speak the language of Rome. I hardly need remark, that Nicolas was not unmindful of the fathers and ecclesiastical writers of the same country. These were translated, or former versions were improved.

* Platina de Vit. Pontif. Donatus Roma Vit. ac Recens.

† Ibid.

BOOK VI. Is the reader, in the mean time, aware, that I am speaking of what was accomplished within the space of a few years; for the number eight measured the whole pontificate of Nicolas. And from the celebration of the jubilee, how short had been the period!

It is acknowledged *, that hitherto the Vatican, or pontifical library had been scantily furnished, when, by the means which I have succinctly mentioned, Nicolas added to it five thousand volumes; and had his life been prolonged, he intended to have continued his collection for the general use of the Roman court. He was sedulously employed, and marking with satisfaction the progress of his labours, when the news, which astounded Europe, arrived, that the capital of the Grecian empire was in the hands of the Turks! The melancholy event is said to have preyed upon the gentle spirit of Nicolas, and helped to terminate his days in the spring of the year 1455†.

I should pity the man who has not contemplated with delight the varied proceedings of Nicolas; while—not to increase and strengthen his prerogative, not to enlarge his territory, not to enrich his dependents; but to provide the most efficacious means for the extirpation of ignorance—he expended those treasures, which a mistaken piety had accumulated round him; and which he well knew must cease to flow when

* Storia della Let. Ital. t. VI. c. IV.

† See Platina de Vit. Pont. but more particularly Vespasiano, the friend and biographer of Nicolas, *inter Rerum Ital. Scrip.* t. XXV.

the light, which *he* was eliciting, should have more fully diffused its rays.

From the elevation to the papal chair of Nicolas, a man of low birth, who was recommended only by his learning and his virtues, I may be allowed to observe on the constitution of the Roman Papacy; that no scheme for the encouragement of talents was ever more wisely devised. At that time, it was of little moment from what country the candidate came. When the intrigues of faction could be suspended, personal merit was alone the object of preference. Where the alluring career of preferment was thus thrown open to general competition, a splendid assemblage of talents would soon be gathered round the Roman throne; whilst, from the time of Nicolas to our own, with the single exception of Alexander VI., who was himself an encourager of letters, no pontiff will be named, whom we can justly load with the reproach of ignorance or of vice. It may, on the contrary, be said, that they were often the most virtuous, and not seldom the most learned prelates of the age. Rome and Europe can testify how much they patronised literature and the arts. In the tranquil bosom of that instructive city, which was frequented by the studious and the inquisitive of all nations, emulation stimulated research, and the means of information were sufficient to satisfy the most ardent curiosity. Cardinals and prelates, whom various acquirements had raised to these dignities, exempt from the anxieties of life, and the demands of a rising progeny, could in no pursuits expend their wealth so decorously as in the encouragement of the polite arts, nor pass their time with so much pleasure, as in the conversation

BOOK VI.

of the learned; nor could they employ their talents in any measures at once so gratifying to themselves, and so advantageous to others, as in adding to the mass of knowledge, by the publication of books, or in diffusing science by extensive correspondence. That this is not a fancied sketch of Rome, and of Roman polity, after Nicolas had imbibed the love of letters, which he transmitted to his successors, will be readily admitted.

The enthusiasm of many Italians in quest of Latin Authors.

Whilst Rome was animated by the labours of Nicolas, and during the years which preceded his elevation, other individuals, both in public and private stations, had been engaged in similar pursuits. When such a general enthusiasm had been excited, that the discovery of a new volume caused the warmest acclamations, it will readily be conceived that journeys would be undertaken, money liberally expended, and no researches spared. It may be thought, indeed, as so many years had now been spent in the investigation, that copies of at least all our Latin authors, were in the hands of the curious; and that nothing more was requisite than to multiply these, and to render them more correct. The fact, however, is, that many single books, or detached parts, of authors were alone possessed; and this will be accounted for by the barbarous neglect which such works had so long experienced; by the dispersion that had separated many; and by the art of transcription itself, which, besides being in a high degree irksome and laborious, was subject to the caprice of individuals, and the fluctuation of events. We may then be rather surprised, that any entire copies of the profane works of antiquity should have escaped through the wreck of ages.

We are much indebted to the scrutinizing research of the learned Florentine, Poggio Bracciolini. In 1414 he accompanied the Roman court to the synod of Constance; on which occasion he had an opportunity of visiting the neighbouring convents, and particularly that of St. Gall, in whose library he discovered, at the bottom of a dark tower, amongst a mass of other writings, a complete copy of the *Institutions* of Quintilian; three books, and a part of the fourth, of Valerius Flaccus; and the Commentaries or Expositions of Quintus Asconius on eight Orations of Cicero. In a letter to a friend *, after expatiating upon the excellencies of Quintilian, and describing the mutilated condition of the Italian copies, he relates the history of this fortunate discovery. "We went," says he, "to the monastery, where, amongst a confused heap of books, which it would be tedious to enumerate, we discovered Quintilian, still whole and sound; but buried in filth and dust. The books, indeed, were in a library, not disposed in a manner suitable to their character, but thrust into an obscure and loathsome dungeon, at the bottom of a tower, into which convicted malefactors would not have been cast. If further searches were made into the receptacles in which these barbarians confine our noble ancestors, I doubt not but that other works might be discovered, which we consider as irretrievably lost."

Poggio discovered other works before his return to Italy. These were Lactantius *de opificio Dei*; the *Architecture* of

* Ep. ad Johan. Amic. inter Scrip. Rer. Ital. t. xx.

BOOK VI. Vitruvius; Priscian on *Grammar*, and a further list, with some of which we are unacquainted: Lucretius, Silius Italicus, Ammianus Marcellinus, Nonius Marcellus, Manilius Astronomus, Lucius Septimius, and others. To these he afterwards added some orations of Cicero, and his treatises *de Finibus* and *de Legibus*. The Lucretius was not complete; nor was the Quintilian free from many errors. "These works," he exultingly observes, "I saved from the German and Gaulish (St. Gall) prisons, and restored them to the light of day."

But Poggio was not without associates in his researches, which were stimulated by the animating praises and exhortations of many friends; whilst money was freely contributed by the opulent. His own ardour was unextinguishable. "Not the severity of winter," says one of his admirers, "not the depth of snow, not the length nor ruggedness of roads could stop his progress." But of this friend he afterwards complained, for not returning to him some works, which he had lent; and he vents, with much acrimony, his indignation against those who withheld from his own and the public inspection such volumes as were in their possession *. But when the pecuniary value of books was become enormous; when, to seek after them was the occupation of the learned and the opulent; and when to possess them was deemed the highest felicity, we cannot be surprised, that means, which were not always honourable, were employed to acquire or to detain so rich a treasure.

---

* See Poggii Vita. Scrip. Rerum Ital. t. xx.

From the neglected and squalid state in which the account of Poggio shows certain works to have been found, and from the paucity even of such copies, two inferences must necessarily be made. 1. That the monks, though their convents had accidentally served as receptacles of books, set no value upon the treasures which they contained: 2. That their hands had not been very strenuously occupied in transcription. It may be allowed that they did transcribe, but very different works from those of classical antiquity, for we have just seen what was found "in the great collection" of St. Gall.

It will not be requisite to pursue this subject further, in recounting the happy achievements of private men, or the noble efforts of others, in collecting and forming libraries. Every city saw its treasures of literature and science increase; its scholars emulous of new fame, and crowds of able professors prepared to conduct the infant mind into all the paths of elegant learning. The historian of Italian literature fully developes the subject in all its parts*; and he may be allowed the gratification of an honest pride, when he asserts, that Europe was indebted to his countrymen for the recovery of many ancient works, which otherwise, perhaps, would have been utterly lost. Almost all the classical authors, he adds, were discovered either in Italy, or by the researches of Italians; by whom they were revised and amended, with as much accuracy as the infancy of criticism would permit; and by whom those splendid and copious libraries were first formed, which, even at this

* See t. VI.

BOOK VI. day, astonish the eyes of the beholder.—Let us turn to Greece and the Grecian language.

Progress of the Greek Language.

The ardour which Italy exhibited in rescuing the relics of elegant literature from oblivion, was not confined to those of her Latin ancestors. We beheld the attempts of Petrarca and Boccaccio to revive, among their countrymen, the study of the Greek language; and, before the close of the century, Manuel Chrysoloras, pressed by the entreaties of many learned men, exchanged the schools of Byzantium for those of Italy. He first taught at Florence, then in Milan, and in other cities; by which means a general taste was excited for Grecian literature, and men of high classical eminence were numbered amongst his scholars. The Tuscan capital was ever foremost in the career of learning; but, after the celebration of her council, in 1439, which was attended by so many learned Greeks, not a few of whom remained within her walls, she might justly be regarded as the Athens of Italy. In the mean time, other scholars, flying from the distresses of Constantinople, sought a retreat in the same hospitable land. Amongst these persons was Theodore Gaza, a man of high endowments, and Demetrius Chalcondyles, a native of Athens, and others, whose names are recorded *.

Cardinal Bessarion.

But, perhaps, Cardinal Bessarion, whom I have mentioned, contributed most by his virtues and his erudition to diffuse a

* See Tiraboschi, t. VI. who examines this interesting part of history with inimitable accuracy; also Bib. Græc. *passim*.

just admiration of his native literature. Promoted to high offices, and employed by successive popes, in legations and embassies, he became, from the circumstances of his origin, an object of peculiar interest, whilst the elegant facility of his Latin diction, which was surpassed only by the melody of his vernacular speech, recommended him to the intercourse of the learned. His proficiency in the Italian tongue, was probably equally admirable. Though hated by the Greeks, whose cause he had deserted, he manifested singular kindness towards such of his countrymen as withdrew to Italy, and patronised their labours. Literature, in all its branches, was his delight. Bologna felt the effects of his munificence. In Rome he formed an academic society, composed of the eminent scholars of both countries, who met at his house, and discussed various points of learning. To his beloved Venice, of which city he was a patrician, he presented his library, which was peculiarly select, and on which he had expended thirty thousand golden crowns. His defence of Plato, whose doctrines had been attacked by some learned Greeks, formed another epoch in the life of Bessarion. This defence, which was aided by the lectures of some public professors of the Greek school, kindled that enthusiasm, out of which sprung the *Platonic Academy*, which at this time was so renowned in Tuscany, and particularly in the house of the Medici. With what congratulations would the learned have received Bessarion, as the successor to Nicolas V. in the papal chair, had the suffrages of the cardinals not been biassed in the ensuing conclave; but prejudices prevailed, and they preferred Alphonsus Borgia, a native of Spain, though in his seventy-eighth year. The cardinal died

BOOK VI. in 1472, leaving behind him many writings in Greek and Latin *.

Various Professors.

To admire and to cultivate the Greek tongue was become so much the fashion, that not to know it, says the historian †, was considered as a mark of ignorance, which was singularly debasing in every pretender to letters. I have before me a list of more than threescore scholars, to which others might be added, who were really masters of the language. And of these, many, no longer requiring the aid of the emigrant Greeks, became themselves professors, publicly delivering lectures on both languages, and teaching in both, the rules of elegant composition. Of these, were Guarino da Verona, John Aurispa, Vittorino da Feltre, Francis Filelfo, and Lorenzo Valla, who all taught in different cities, at the same time, and were highly celebrated. But the moral characters of all did not keep pace with their intellectual endowments; and some disgrace was brought on the cause of letters by the personal altercations, which jealousy conspired to foment ‡. The censure is meant more directly to apply to Filelfo and Lorenzo Valla, to whom may well be joined the Florentine, whom I praised, Poggio Bracciolini. Whilst their deep learning and various literature presented to the Italian mind the noblest

* Platina, Panegyr. in Bessarion. Brucker Hist. Phil. t. IV. Hodius de Græc. Illust.

† Storia della Let. Ital. t. VI. l. III. Bib. G. l. V. c. 43. t. X.

‡ See Tiraboschi, ibid.

productions of former days, and familiarized the ear to their harmony; the harshest sounds of discord, which were heard in bitter invective, and in mutual recriminations, ceased not to disgust the pacific and sober men of every party.

If the days of these professors, Greek and Latin, were generally spent in public lectures, or in giving private instructions, they still found time for translation: and as long as Homer, says another Italian writer *, Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, Polybius, Plutarch, and the other poets and historians of Greece shall be read, so long will be remembered the names of George of Trebizonde, Chalcondyles, Argyropulus, Theodore Gaza, among the Greeks; and among the Latins, of Guarino, Ambrose of Camaldoli, Lorenzo Valla, Poggio, and Leonardo Aretino. Even at this time the learned critic peruses their versions with pleasure.

Greek Works.

The copies of Greek authors were now become numerous. As the emigrants successively arrived, they naturally brought with them a commodity which bore a high price; and these copies were multiplied by transcriptions. Cardinal Bessarion, whose means were so ample, added to his stock; and early in the century, three Latins, who have been mentioned, Guarino da Verona, John Aurispa, and Francis Filelfo, purposely made a journey to Constantinople, and returned with a rich supply. Their first object was, to perfect themselves in

* Denina. Vicende della Letterat. t. 1. p. 261.

BOOK VI. the Greek language, of which there were still but few masters in the West*.

Gianozzo Manetti.

These were instances of wonderful ardour; and no recital could so well mark the strong propensities of the age, as the history of the lives of its scholars. Gianozzo Manetti, a Florentine, born of an ancient and noble family, late in the fourteenth century, was designed for commerce, a profession to which the Medici gave consequence; but his inclination was turned to letters. These he began to cultivate with unremitting eagerness; and we soon find in his hands the works of Virgil, of Terence, and of Cicero. Thus grounded in the purity and elegance of language, he proceeded through the rules of rhetoric to those of Logic; and availing himself of the helps which were afforded by a learned society in the neighbourhood, he proceeded under their tuition into the walks of philosophy, and drank deep of the stream of science. Theology next engaged his attention. This study, he said, as best adapted to the condition of man, should end only with life; and he reposed in the contemplation of the divine nature, and the moral truths of religion. The great Austin was here his favourite author, some of whose books his memory was sufficiently retentive to repeat.

Though he was so richly stored with learning, we may now view him again occupied with the elements of language, and

* Maffei Verona Illustrat. p. II. Storia della Lett. Ital. t. VI. l. I. c. IV.

studying Greek under Ambrose of Camaldoli. But his progress was astonishing; for it is related, that taking into his hand a book of Aristotle, he could render it into Latin without hesitation. Nine years had been thus passed, when, with a becoming ambition, he broke from the severe retirement of study; and appeared in public, mixing in the learned societies which met at stated places, and engaging in their scientific disputations. The scheme of these societies was taken from the walks and academic conversations which were once so celebrated among the sages of Athens. On these occasions, Latin was the language which was spoken; and it was remarked of Manetti, that, upon every subject of discussion, he delivered himself with fluency and elegance. Leonardo Aretino was once his antagonist on a point of philosophy. It was observed, that Manetti had the advantage, and the applauses were loud in his favour, which so irritated the former, who had long enjoyed a secure pre-eminence, that he gave vent to his rage in a torrent of petulance and insult. The next morning, however, he waited on Manetti: "You are well revenged," said he to him, "for my behaviour of yesterday: I have passed a sleepless night."

His next study was the Hebrew language; in order to acquire which he took a Jew into his house, and afterwards engaged another master of the same nation, with whom he read the sacred writings in the original, for five hours each day; and some ponderous commentators. Nor did this suffice. We afterwards find him covenanting with two Greeks and a Hebrew, to live with him, on condition that each should converse with him in his own tongue. He thus became familiarized with the languages of Palestine and of Greece.

I speak not of his exalted moral qualities; nor of the estimation in which he was held by his fellow-citizens, who raised him to the highest offices; nor of the regard of foreign princes, whom he visited in his embassies. That he was dear to Nicolas V., in whose court he resided, when once exiled from his country, the reader will readily believe; and of him, Alphonsus king of Naples, was heard to say, that, " were he reduced to a single loaf, he would divide it with Manetti." In this court he spent the three last years of his life, loaded with favours by Alphonsus and his son Ferdinand, and principally engaged in writing. His works comprise a variety of subjects, moral, historical, biographical, and oratorical, besides versions from the Hebrew and the Greek. From the first he translated the Psalms; from the second many books of the New Testament, as likewise some treatises of Aristotle. We are told, that it was his design, if death had not prevented its execution, to have formed a library in his native city, which should be open to all comers, and serve as a receptacle for his own compositions: for he lamented, that the works of many modern writers, from the want of such precaution, were often irreparably lost. Manetti died at Naples in 1459, than whom a greater man had not been seen, whether we regard his virtues or his erudition*.

The reader who may wish to be more acquainted with the characters and writings of those scholars, who, like Manetti, reflected a lustre to the present period, and whose names I

* See Vita Jannotti Manetti, by Naldo Naldi, his contemporary and fellow-citizen, Rerum Ital. Script. t. xx.

have incidentally mentioned, cannot be at a loss for ample sources of information. In referring to these, he will find, that, in *grammar* and the art of *rhetoric*, chiefly excelled Guarino de Verona, John Aurispa, Vittorino de Feltre, Gasparino Barzizza, Francis Filelfo, and Laurence Valla, all celebrated professors in different cities:—In *Latin poetry*, to the cultivation of which many were allured by the growing taste for ancient models, he will find names, which were, at the time placed high on the lists of fame, but whose productions have long ceased to be read:—In *history*, comprising its several departments, will be found, in antiquities, Biondo Flavio*; in modern and particular story, Leonardo Aretino†, Poggio Bracciolini‡, with the historiographers of the other cities; and in biography and other narrations a copious list§.

Cultivated State of the Latin Language

I pass over more scientific subjects, which were all in hands: on which, however, and on those I have mentioned, it may be proper to observe, that Latin was the language, in which they were severally discussed. Since the attention of scholars had been so strongly engaged, in the discovery and perusal of the classical remains of Greece and Rome, an almost exclusive preference was given to the dead languages; in which those wrote who were ambitious of

* Roma Instaurata—Italia Illustrata.

† De temporibus suis—Historia Florentina, lib. XII.

‡ Historia Florentina, libris VIII. § See Storia della Letter. Ital. t. VI.

BOOK VI. learned fame. They wrote in Latin, and translated into Latin from the Greek. Modern tongues, even the Italian, were deemed unworthy of attention, unless to beguile the intervals of literary recreation. There was an evil in this preference: but it was one which would be corrected; and, in the mean time, the preference served to give that importance to ancient learning, by which alone a just and accurate taste could be formed; and by which the vernacular idioms of Europe would be improved.

The Latin, which these scholars wrote, compared, not with that of Petrarca, but with that of the long series of preceding times, was greatly amended. It possessed energy, aptitude of expression, and many other resemblances of the parent stock; but it wanted that elegance and purity of diction, which can hardly be expected in imitative composition. Their historians, of whom I can speak with most confidence*, not satisfied, as their predecessors had been, with the statement of what they had read or heard with an unin-quisitive simplicity, evinced a greater share of critical discernment, and of patient investigation. Their style, besides, is often correct, and their works exhibit passages of genuine eloquence. The account of the defence of Jerom of Prague before the synod of Constance, and of the manner of his death, by Poggio Bracciolini †, who was present at the scene, has seldom, I think, been equalled. It forms the subject of

* See Rerum Ital. Scriptores *passim*.

† In Fascicul. Rer. expet. et fug. t. i. p. 304.

a letter to Leonardo Aretino; when speaking of the oratory of Jerom he says: "When I consider what his choice of words was, what his elocution, what his reasoning, what his countenance, his voice, his action, we must allow, however much we may admire the ancients, that, in such a cause, no one could have approached nearer to the model of their eloquence." I would refer the reader to the same Poggio, when having ascended the Capitoline hill, reposing among the ruins of temples, and columns, he undertakes from that commanding spot, to describe the wide and various prospect of desolation, which the fallen condition of Rome then exhibited *. All, indeed, did not write as Poggio; but how few were the Ciceroes, the Virgils, the Livies, in the best ages of Roman literature.

It was natural to have expected, from the vivid admiration which the Muse of Petrarca had excited, and which continued to be felt—that the vernacular language of Italy would henceforth have been exclusively employed in poetical composition. Yet, speaking on this subject, the historian says †: "Our poetry was forgotten, and relapsed almost into her former rudeness. Few, and generally of little value, were our versifiers." Nearly the same may be said of the writers in prose. Boccaccio, as well as Petrarca, might have complained of this neglect; but *their* enthusiastic love of the

* Pogg. de Variet. Fortunæ; or the passage as beautifully amended by Mr. Gibbon, t. VI. p. 619.

† Tiraboschi, t. VI. l. 3, c. 3.

BOOK VI.

ancients, must not be forgotten with the ardour with which they laboured to recover their relics, and to diffuse a better taste. In this their example was successful; and it sufficed. All which might be expected, could not, at once, be accomplished. More attention to Italian composition would have weakened the attention to works of the ancients, which, if again lost sight of, might never have experienced another revival.

Antiquarian Researches.

I should perhaps have noticed, that the eagerness to discover and the ardour to collect the ancient monuments of art, kept pace with the zeal to restore their literary remains. They must serve, it was plain, in many cases mutually to throw light upon each other. Europe, and particularly its noblest portion, Italy, was diligently surveyed; inscriptions, medals, statues, and other remains, were either transported, and formed into collections, or designed and copied. These afterwards occupied the attention of the learned antiquary, who subjoined comments and illustrations; by which the manners, the laws, the progress in the arts, and many events of former times were more distinctly brought into view; whilst the obscurities of the poets and other writers were clearly elucidated by the same means. In this line Ciriaco of Ancona was a successful labourer. With a patience which no toil could exhaust, he more than once visited the East, and left no recesses unexplored in Italy and the adjoining regions*. I mentioned the works of Biondo

* See Storia della Let. Ital. t. VI. l. I. c. 5.

Flavio on the antiquities of Rome and Italy: and the same subject, particularly as it regarded Rome*, was pursued by other scholars. That many errors and inadvertencies should occur in the writings of these men, on subjects which had been hitherto untouched, cannot excite our surprise; but who can refuse the tribute of applause to their extraordinary industry? Who does not admire the diligence with which they read, and extracted, from the ancient authors, whatever passages seemed to bear on the points which they were discussing? We learn, besides, from them, what was the condition of Italy and of Rome, at the time they wrote.

It may be asked—Did this love of ancient monuments, as connected with literature, and the patronage of the great and opulent by which it was so warmly cherished, excite a correspondent emulation in the breasts of artists? This it certainly did; and on this subject, comprising architecture, sculpture, and painting, may be consulted the authorities which I quote below†.

State of other Countries.

Having conducted my reader through the flowery region of Italy, and described to him the renovated state of letters; shall I leave him in the full enjoyment of this scene, but uncertain as to the progress of other countries, in the success of which he may, perhaps, feel even a warmer interest? From

* See Storia della Let. Ital. t. vi. l. iii. c. 1.

† Scrip. Rer. Ital. passim. Vasari vite de' Pitt. Storia della Lett. Ital. t. vi. l. iii. c. 8.

what has been already so amply detailed, no such uncertainty can, I trust, remain; and, besides, the great fact of Italian renovation being established, and the obstacles to the further diffusion of letters being by that means in a great degree removed, it remained only patiently to wait the result, in its application to other countries, which must soon become manifest. Moreover, the revival of letters in Europe is not what I undertook to develop: as my object was, principally, to describe the decay of literature; and to collect the scattered incidents which finally led to its resuscitation.

It may, however, still be amusing, briefly to consider, what was the general aspect of Europe, when the first half of the fifteenth century was drawing to its close, which coincided with the fall of the Grecian empire*, by which the western world was enriched with the last remains of its scholars and its literature. The various modern tongues exhibited some specimens of improvement; and we read of many authors. But the political horizon was not such as to encourage high literary expectation. France had not yet recovered from her wasteful contests with the English. England, a prey to factions, which the weak arm of Henry VI. was unable to suppress, was soon to be involved in the deadly feuds of the houses of York and Lancaster—Spain was still divided by several interests, and humbled by the presence of the Moorish settlers—In Germany, the recollection of past sufferings, and the feeling of unredressed grievances, kept alive a spirit of

* See Append. I.

animosity and discontent. Yet, in the midst of so many inauspicious circumstances, the increased desire for intellectual improvement was visibly manifesting its effects. Libraries were collected, and within this and the last century more than thirty universities had been founded, with the allurement of academical honours and rewards.

The foundation of universities and colleges—if it evinced in the founders themselves a laudable desire to co-operate with the general disposition to improvement—did not, by any direct means, promote the cause of polite letters. Theological studies, and what were deemed scientific pursuits, as they were traced out by the *Master of Sentences*, or his approved commentators, almost exclusively formed the general outline of education. In these could be little reference to classical authorities, of which there was no need; and few were as yet sensible, that, the more the taste is refined, and the understanding disengaged from sophistical subtleties, the mind is more accessible to the impressions of truth, and better calculated to impart its own impressions to others.

The scholars of Germany, of France, of Spain, of England, could not be ignorant of the progress which the Italians had made; of the estimation in which they held the works of the ancient writers; and of the improvements which they had effected in their own language, and in the general arts of composition. I have before noticed the intercourse with Rome, which still continued; and what was a daily increasing grievance, the embassies of legates, nuncios, and Roman prelates. But still they brought with them more ur-

BOOK VI.

banity of manners, the endowments of a superior education, and a taste for letters; all which---in spite of the ill-humour with which their progress was surveyed, and which, from multiplied causes, increased as their residences were fixed---could not fail to produce good. In the hours of private and social intercourse we may, without dipping the pencil in the colours of fiction, represent to ourselves these strangers, conversing on many literary subjects with the votaries of learning in the language of Terence; enlivening their conversation by apposite quotations from Cicero or Virgil; dwelling on the superior beauties of many writers of Greece; telling what their countrymen had done; and exhibiting the copies which they had transcribed. On such occasions, we may readily believe, that the names of Petrarca and Boccaccio would not be forgotten; and that, to enhance the acquired powers of their own tongue, they would repeat, and attempt to translate, the sonnets of one, and the tales of the other. A wish of further improvement would thus be excited in many minds, and of which some success would be the result.

Oxford and Cambridge.

As I spoke of universities, the word seemed to suggest to me, that something might, with much propriety, be here added on those of Oxford and Cambridge. I remarked that, at the end of the thirteenth century, Oxford had only three colleges, and Cambridge one: but in the course of the hundred and fifty years which followed, a great accession took place in both. Exeter college was founded in 1315; Oriel in in 1324; and Queen's, which owes its name to Queen Philippa, the friend of Froissard, and the wife of Edward III. about the year 1340. We then come to New College, the

splendid monument of the munificent William de Wyke- BOOK VI.
ham.

This patron of letters, "whose memory," says Camden*, "shall be celebrated through all ages," was born of low parents, in the county of Southampton, about the year 1324. By the generosity of a friend, he received his first education at Winchester, whence proceeding to Oxford he studied under able masters. This is not certain: he seems rather to have been indebted, for the useful knowledge which he possessed, to his own industry, which may be esteemed a better guide than the contentious sophistry of the schools, with which Oxford was then agitated. After some years, we find him employed in the office of secretary to his first patron, the constable of Winchester castle, in the discharge of which his prudence and discretion were so great, that, before the age of twenty-four years, he was called to the service of the king. His employments in this service were important and various; amongst which let me mention the rebuilding of Windsor castle, as it now appears, the execution of which was entrusted to him. Edward, whose eye was penetrating, knew how to value the talents of his servant; and this servant, says the historian †, "grew much in the king's favour, and quickly reaped those fruits which the smiles of princes are wont to afford."

* See his Hampshire.

† Hist. and Antiq. of Oxford, vol. III. edited by Gutch.

BOOK VI. But at this time there was a larger field for the display of talents, and in it more ample means of success, than royal bounty could alone bestow. Wykeham, it is said, had always designed to take orders: he was admitted into the church about the year 1361, and advanced from one preferment to another.—His offices in the state kept pace with his ecclesiastical dignities—till, in 1367, he was raised to the See of Winchester. In the bull given on the occasion, the Pope, Urban V. then at Avignon, speaks of Wykeham, as "recommended to him by the testimony of many persons worthy of credit, for his knowledge of letters, his probity of life and manners, and his prudence and circumspection in affairs both spiritual and temporal." Winchester was the place which Wykeham loved; but the episcopal station, in the eye of the king, served principally to qualify him for a higher office about his person. He made him chancellor or first minister; but, within four years, he resigned the seals; when he could devote himself, with less interruption and more assiduity, to the concerns of his diocese, to the reformation of irregularities and abuses, and to the reparation of the episcopal buildings, which had been suffered to fall into decay. At this time no less than twelve palaces of residence belonged to the See of Winchester.

From contemplating the general state of the country, in its morals, its scanty means of instruction, and the prevailing ignorance in all the ranks of society, Wykeham seems to have formed the design of expending his vast riches, while he could himself direct their application, in some institutions, which might prove most beneficial, and the least liable to

abuse. But while he revolved this generous design, and was preparing means for its accomplishment, a sudden reverse of fortune dissipated all his schemes, and threatened him with utter ruin. The transaction is involved in obscurity. It seems, however, that towards the close of the life of the old king, and when that of the Prince of Wales was despaired of, his brother, the Duke of Lancaster, the friend of Chaucer, aspired to the crown. The friends of the dying prince, among whom was the bishop of Winchester, vigorously withstood the suspected design; but the prince died, leaving Wykeham one of the executors of his will; and the party of the duke was soon in a condition to retaliate. They exhibited articles of accusation against the bishop, for crimes which he was alleged to have committed during his administration. On one charge only, which was very trifling in its nature, judgment was given by certain lords in council; but on this judgment, the temporalities of the See were seized into the king's hands, and the prelate forbidden to come within twenty miles of the court. This state of proscription was of short duration. In the space of a few weeks, he recovered his temporalities, and was restored to the royal favour; and soon after this, the king dying in 1377, on the accession of Richard II. his pardon passed the privy seal, conceived "in the fullest and most extensive terms;" and he was declared free from every charge. The loss, however, sustained by the bishop, in this affair, is said to have amounted to 10,000 marks. BOOK VI.

In the turbulent reign which now ensued, Wykeham, on all occasions, conducted himself so as to merit the good-will of the prince, and the esteem and confidence of the nation. But he had leisure to recur to the great plan, which he had

BOOK VI. so long meditated, which was; to erect and endow two colleges, the one at Oxford, the other at Winchester. The plan, says his biographer *, boldly devised as it were, at a single thought, was noble, uniform, and complete. "It was no less than to provide for the perpetual maintenance and instruction of two hundred scholars; to afford them a liberal support; and to lead them through an entire course of education; from the first elements of letters, through the whole circle of the sciences; from the lowest class of grammatical learning to the highest degrees in the several faculties. It consisted of two parts, rightly forming two establishments, the one subordinate to the other. The design of the one was to lay the foundation; that of the other to raise and complete the superstructure: the former was to supply the latter with proper subjects, and the latter was to improve the advantages received in the former."

With a view to this great and original plan, he had already formed two infant societies, which were maintained at his expense; and had purchased lands, when, in the year 1380, having obtained the king's patent, and a bull from Rome, he directed the first stone to be laid of that edifice in Oxford, which has acquired the name of New College. It was completed, as it now stands, in six years; when the society, headed by their warden, a kinsman of Wykeham, entered in solemn procession, and received their statutes.

* Life of Wykeham, by Lowth, p. 182.

These statutes, on which great attention has been bestowed, have been much praised. They were the result of patient thought and long observation. As long as Wykeham lived, he continued still more to improve and perfect them. They have, indeed, been considered as the most complete code in their kind; and in succeeding times, the founders of other colleges took them for their model.

The sciences directed to be pursued were the canon and civil law, philosophy and theology; while two of the students might apply themselves to medicine, and two to astronomy.

The lands and estates, with which this college was endowed by the founder, were, at the time, fully sufficient for its support, and amply supplied all the purposes of the institution: to the progress and success of which he himself never ceased to attend.

The year after New College was finished, in 1387, he began that of Winchester, which was also completed in the same term of six years. In this house, designed as a nursery for that of Oxford, and in which, therefore, the elementary studies are to be pursued, is contained likewise a similar society, consisting of a warden and seventy scholars. The statutes are a counterpart of the former; and he wisely provided for their due observance, by making this college, as well in government and discipline, as in use and design, subordinate to that at Oxford. I need not add, that its endowments were ample.

BOOK VI. Wykeham long enjoyed the exquisite pleasure of contemplating the happy effects of his beneficence in the increasing success and prosperity of these establishments. But his beneficence was limited only by his means. His last edifice was not completed; when he undertook, at his own expense, to rebuild a great part of the cathedral church of Winchester: which he also lived to accomplish within the space of about ten years. Whilst in these works he gratified his taste for architecture, and exercised all the great and kindly energies of his mind, we find him busied in many ecclesiastical concerns, in correcting abuses, and conciliating differences; and even deeply employed, as his king and country called for his services, in the transactions of the turbulent reign of Richard. In 1389 he was again chancellor; the seals of which office he resigned after two years, when the infirmities of age, and the distressful scenes of the revolution which soon ensued, served to withdraw him from all further participation in the affairs of government.

In the repose of retirement, Wykeham attended to the more immediate concerns of his diocese, and to the final disposal of the wealth, which still remained in his hands. We are told, that it was the uniform rule of his life, which may be considered as the best test of liberality, never to postpone to the morrow a generous action, which could immediately be performed. He had made his will, in which the boundless generosity of his former life is fully displayed; but to enhance the benefit which he intended to confer, he distributed his legacies as occasions presented themselves, with his own hands, and became the executor of his own will. A codicil

settled any difficulties which might hence arise. Thus was this great man occupied, when in the year 1404, and in the eightieth year of his life he sunk into the grave, after a gentle and gradual decay. He was buried in the cathedral church at Winchester.

When we reflect on the vast sums, which we have seen expended by Wykeham, and peruse the contents of his will, whilst we take into the account his many other benefactions, in remittances to poor tenants, reliefs to the indigent and distressed, repairs of roads and churches, purchases of estates in addition to the demesne lands of his See, and in acts of unbounded hospitality, we feel some difficulty in believing, that so great a mass of treasure should have been collected by honourable means: but how pleasing is the reflection, that this treasure was possessed by a man, whose capacity of mind was large enough to dispense the whole in beneficent and noble donations, for the comfort of the needy, the advancement of piety, and the promotion of learning—with the exception of six hundred marks a-year, in manors and estates, which he bequeathed to his heir, Sir Thomas Wykeham *.

Lincoln College was founded in 1427; and in 1437 that of All Souls. Of the founder of the latter, Henry Chicheley, Archbishop of Canterbury, I must observe, that, having received his education in the colleges of Wykeham, and, probably, under his inspection, he became an illustrious follower

* Life of W. of Wykeham, by Lowth. Hist. and Antiq. of Oxford, by A. Wood.

BOOK VI. of his example. By Henry IV. he was employed in embassies and other affairs of high concernment; and, in reward of his services, was preferred to the See of St. David's. Not less beloved, and not less employed by Henry V. he was raised, in 1414, to the vacant chair of Canterbury. In this high station, while the prerogative of Rome, notwithstanding the reclamations of Europe, bore down all opposition, Chichely proved himself the strenuous advocate of the laws and liberties of his country; and in the same station, observes the historian *, "waxing wondrous rich," he again copied, the brightest features in the example of his first master. At Higham-Ferrers, the place of his birth, he built and founded a collegiate church, and, adjoining to it, an hospital; and, in 1437, when sufficient purchases of land had been made, he proceeded, with great solemnity, to lay the first stone of his college. It seems to have been completed with incredible rapidity, and at an expense far above the reach of modern affluence. The code of statutes, prescribed by Chicheley for his society, is evidently modelled after those of New College. He died in 1443 †.

Another generous imitator of Wykeham was William Waynflete, bishop also of Winchester, and founder of Magdalen College in Oxford; but as this foundation comes not within the period which I am not willing to exceed, it shall suffice barely to have noticed another instance of the powerful in-

* Hist. and Antiq. of Oxford, vol. III. p. 253.

† Ibid.

fluence created by the example of Wykeham. Waynflete had himself been educated at Winchester, and afterwards, as is generally admitted, in New College*.

Whilst Oxford was thus signally enriched, and the foundation of her future greatness laid, the other seat of the Muses was not neglected. In 1340, Clare Hall was founded: Bennet College in 1346: Pembroke Hall in 1347: Caius College in 1348: about 1353 Trinity Hall: King's College, in 1441, by Henry VI. and by his wife, Margaret of Anjou; Queen's College, a few years later.

Henry himself was much attached to the college of Winchester, which he often visited†; and having personally witnessed the spirit of its statutes, and their general effects in the prosperity of the institution, he wisely directed them to be transcribed, with very little change, and given to his two colleges of Eton and of that in Cambridge.

If we except these establishments of Cambridge—some of which owed much to the beneficence of certain ladies and the royal personages just mentioned—those of Oxford were solely indebted, as we have seen, to the ecclesiastical order; a fact, which speaks strongly in favour of the celibacy of ecclesiastics, which, at that time, universally prevailed. Princes

* Hist. and Antiq. of Oxford, vol. III. p. 253.

† Life of Wykeham, Append. No. XIII.

BOOK VI. and other wealthy persons might have done, what Wykeham, and Chicheley, and Waynflete did; but it is not probable, with so many other calls on their property, that they would have done it; nor if those prelates themselves had been encumbered with families, is it probable, that their wealth would have been turned into such a full stream of disinterestedness of benevolence and patriotism. The cries of nature and of common justice would have opposed a barrier to such an application. But the churchmen of these ages who were almost exclusively possessed of mental cultivation, were called, as ministers and statesmen, to fill the highest offices of government, whilst the gates of church-preferment stood open before them.

All the sources of wealth were thus in their hands. If wealth, which was thus acquired, was sometimes indecorously lavished, we cannot be surprised; but when we behold such beneficence as that which has been lately mentioned and directed to such glorious ends, he must be a sordid judge, who does not glow with admiration at the thought. Nepotism, which is in itself a natural propensity, has, with reason, been charged on some Roman bishops and other prelates: but in Wykeham and his followers, the ruling biass was patriotism. Still we presume to say, that ignorance clouded their understandings; that their hearts were narrowed by superstition; and that, strangers to the pages of classical antiquity, their manners were unpolished, and their conversation unrefined. In the two last members of the charge may be some truth; in the two former, none; and, under this impression, I am almost ready to retract some assertions which I have made, and repeating the names of Wyke-

ham and Chicheley, I am well disposed, independently of the luminous state of Italy, to part, in good humour, from the age. BOOK VI.

What Obstacles still remained.

We will now return, for the last time, to Italy.—I described what was the progress which learning had made, when no more than half of the century had elapsed. My view extends no further; for at this point its complete revival may be fixed. We have beheld the encouraging patronage of princes; seminaries and schools opened; learned professors appointed; the Greeks co-operating in the same work; books, in both languages, ardently sought for, transcribed, and multiplied; libraries richly stored, and free to public perusal; the language of Greece studied, and its elegant productions translated into Latin; in one word, a general enthusiasm excited, and the scholars of the age, with a noble emulation, contending, in their various pursuits, for the palm of classical excellence. Former obstacles—though, in some degree, surmounted, as they applied to Italy—still remained unaltered, opposing an iron barrier to the general diffusion of knowledge. I mean the obstacles arising from the real paucity of books—occasioned by the delay, labour, and accumulated difficulties of multiplying copies by transcription.

Yet it may be asked, how it was in Greece; and in Rome, in the brightest eras of their literature, when they possessed no better means of communicating knowledge? Their means of communicating knowledge, by books, must certainly have been scanty; and the number of their books must have been comparatively small. I have, therefore, no hesitation in saying, that learning, by whatever means it acquired its

BOOK VI. transcendent excellence, was in the hands of few. The scholar well knows the narrow limits of Greece, considered in its greatest geographical dimensions; and Attica alone was peculiarly famed as the seat of letters. Rome also, the capital of the world, was the capital of learning; and it would be vain to look for historians, poets, or philosophers, without the precincts of her walls. And these walls became the general resort of the talents which sprung up in the provinces.

But yet the Roman and Grecian people, at the time to which I allude, were themselves highly cultivated, and compared with other nations, singularly enlightened. Their cultivation was not derived from books, nor were they enlightened by reading; but when once a certain degree of taste had been generally diffused, they listened to their orators and rhetoricians; committed to memory the speeches of their generals, and the admired compositions of their poets; and thus seizing the incidental opportunities of instruction, they kept alive and exercised, what might then be deemed a national disposition to intellectual improvement. Such a disposition might, I think, have been generated amongst the people of Italy, by the ordinary means, which had now begun to operate; whilst a select number of men, such as Dante, Petrarca, and Boccaccio, and some of their followers, would have advanced to greater heights, and, perhaps, have left little unaccomplished. This might have happened; but what I wish to assert, is, that, on a large scale, which should comprise the other kingdoms of Europe, there could have been no security for any permanent success; if for any success at all; had the difficulties arising from the necessity of multiplying

books by transcription, continued to oppose the same obstacles to intellectual improvement.

The Art of Printing is discovered.

This consideration greatly enhances the value of that discovery, which, at this critical moment, broke on Europe. It was the discovery of the ART OF PRINTING.

The honour of the invention has been ascribed to different persons, and claimed by different cities: but to whomever the glory belongs, to Coster at Harlem, to Guttemberg at Mentz, or to Shoeffer at Strasburg; it is acknowledged that the invention, rude in its origin, proceeded from letters engraven on blocks of wood, to moveable types of the same substance, and from these to metallic types cast in a mould.

No period could have been so opportune for this great discovery as the present. Had it happened at a time when books were little thought of, and he who could barely read was deemed a scholar, it would, probably, have been neglected, and, possibly, irrecoverably lost; though, I admit, that, in such circumstances, it is not likely, that the discovery would have been made. It was the general ardour for literary improvement, and the daily experience of difficulties in the prosecution, which stimulated the force of ingenuity and opened the way to success. Invention is truly called the child of necessity; and we may be surprised, that a discovery, which is so obviously simple, was not sooner made by those who most sensibly felt the impediments by which their progress was prevented or delayed.

The advantages, arising from the art of printing, are too

BOOK VI.

palpable to require a particular enumeration. The easy multiplication of copies; their increased cheapness and their superior correctness, were its principal recommendations. The art might occasion some incidental evils, to which every thing human is liable; but they are comparatively of no importance.

We have traced many of the causes to which the revival of letters was owing; the press will now accelerate their progress, and extend their circulation beyond the most sanguine anticipation of former times. Italy, it is admitted, had no concern in the first invention of the typographical art, the date of which is not carried beyond the middle of the fifteenth century; but, before its close, few Italian towns were unprovided with a press; and the name of Aldo became early celebrated for the beauty of his letter and the correctness of his copies, in the great collection which he made of the classics of Greece and Rome*.

* Storia della Lett. Ital. t. VI. l. I. c. 4. On the Art of Printing, see Meerman Origines Typographicæ.

CONCLUSION.

Conclusion.

IN advancing through this long series of time, it would have been easy, as the documents lay before me, to have accumulated extracts, and thus to have formed a more ponderous volume: but should I by this means have conveyed more valuable information? I omitted nothing, which I thought, that a reasonable curiosity, would wish to know. To compress, where matter is abundant, and yet still to leave the subject sufficiently full, and to be instructive, is the duty of a compiler, and one of the necessary arts of compilation. How far I have succeeded in this point, I must leave it to others to determine.

I think that I shall not be accused of an undue partiality to Italy, for the constant attention which I have given to all the periods of its literary history. My motives were obvious, and I trust that the reader will consider them satisfactory. I was aware, the first rays of intellectual light would issue from Italy, and, therefore, it became my duty carefully to watch, and to report, the progress of incidents and circum-

Conclusion.

stances which tended to accelerate the happy period. In this view, the state of other countries was comparatively uninteresting. And as they continued to exhibit during many ages a gloomy uniformity of ignorance—broken only, but not really enlightened, nor improved, by occasional coruscations of intellect—to have dwelt, with much minuteness, on each, would have been without any profit to the reader, and productive only of weariness to the writer. In every period, since the declension of literature, the description of it in one country, has, with the exception of a few circumstances, adequately represented the state of all. In these times, the appearance of a man of superior attainments, served only like those verdant spots, which are called *Oases*, in the deserts of Africa, to break the dreary continuity of barrenness.

Should it still be thought, that, without any injury to my plan, I might have extended my view of other countries, I can add only that, if I had done it, a wider region of sterility would have been expanded before the reader's eye. Here it was not my wish to detain him. In the characters of the rulers, I noted what seemed most promising; and in the various changes in the constitutions of states and the forms of society, I did not omit any thing which appeared to me to have a direct influence on letters, or to be connected with them. But much has doubtless escaped me. I was, however, not seldom apprehensive—my mind being full of the subject—that I might dwell on points which were more interesting to myself than to the reader. The prolixity of authors is generally ascribable to this cause. It is more advisable to say too little, than too much. Hence if we some-

times fail of gratifying curiosity, we may at least avoid the production of disgust. Conclusion.

In treating this subject, learned foreigners have bestowed more minute attention in investigating particular topics, which I have only slightly and incidentally mentioned. They speak, in their several periods of time, of the state of mathematical studies, of natural and experimental philosophy, of statistics, of jurisprudence, and of medicine. These may be severally interesting; but they seemed not much connected with my view of the subject. Literature presented the same aspect, being influenced, in its decline, by the same causes, whether medicine was well or ill understood, laws amended or utterly changed, or some elements of practical philosophy prosecuted with success. Yet, I am fully convinced, that whatever tended to exercise and to invigorate the reasoning powers, or to alleviate the condition of man, tended, at the same time, by a positive impulse, to accelerate his progress towards improvement. Hence I have been induced to dwell on some points of discussion, and some historical incidents, which might otherwise without any detriment, have been omitted, as the subjects above-mentioned have generally been. But the reader has lost little by the omission, as he would readily understand, that when the condition of the more easy and favourite pursuits was so debased, more abstruse and recondite exertions in geometry and jurisprudence could not be elevated to an high pitch of eminence.

I have, however, when it was too late, sometimes blamed

Conclusion.

myself for not having entered into the subject of geography, which is so intimately connected with that of history. By way of supplement, I will now, therefore, add, that, among the growing energies of mind, which have been remarked, that, by which, at this time, nautical skill was improved, and the boundaries of geographical science enlarged, was not the least conspicuous. The crusaders saw much of Europe; and some regions of the East; and, at other times, travellers, actuated by various motives, had returned with no small stock of information, however mixed with fables, respecting countries even more remote. With some the ruling motive was to spread christian truth; whilst others were influenced by commercial speculations. But since the fall of the Roman empire to the present era, it seems agreed that navigation had made little progress; though the wonderful property of the magnet was known, and the mariner's compass had been constructed a hundred years before. The Spaniards, turning their backs on the land, first ventured to commit themselves to unknown seas; and the fifteenth century had hardly opened, when the Portuguese commenced those discoveries on the western coast of Africa, which gradually led them to its most southern cape: whilst the great Columbus meditated and matured the plan, which was to astonish Europe by the prospect of a New World. Prince Henry of Portugal was the soul of these first undertakings; his superior knowledge, directed all the views of the discoverers, who were encouraged and protected by his patriotism *.

* See Robertson's History of America, vol. I. b. I.

Conclusion.

'From the spirit of enterprise, thus strongly manifested, it may justly be inferred, that, if the natives of Spain and Portugal, had in literary pursuits been left behind by the more fortunate citizens of some other countries, they were possessed of capacities not inferior to any; though the direction of them was not the same. But it seems, that they also had read at least the works of the ancient geographers, and impressed their minds with the conjectural speculations of their philosophers :—for when the Portuguese navigators had advanced to the limits of the torrid zone, they were for some time deterred from proceeding, by the notion which prevailed among the ancients, as recorded by Cicero*—that the excessive heat, which reigned perpetually in that region of the globe, was so fatal to life as to render it uninhabitable. Their activity had been likewise kept alive by the peculiar circumstances of the country. Hostile as they were to the Moorish settlers, from the strongest motives of religion and of policy—I know not that they could have been induced to draw from them those aids in letters, which they were so able to communicate; and which strangers from other countries sometimes so freely borrowed: but a martial and adventurous spirit, which was at this time augmented by a series of successes, while it gave energy to the character, visibly raised the possessors of it to a higher scale in the rank of human beings, and rendered them capable of wonderful achievements.

* See Somnium Scipionis.

Conclusion. In Germany, another spirit brooded in the public mind, indicating discontent, impatience of grievances, and an anxious, but undefined, wish of change. Their complaints had often been heard; but no redress had been obtained. With the rest of Europe they complained, that the power, exercised by the Roman bishops, was exorbitant and oppressive; that their legates and other agents were rapacious and arrogant; that the manners of the higher and lower clergy and of the monks were disorderly and dissolute; and they loudly demanded, as their fathers had done, a reformation of the church in its head and in its members. It would have been well, had these complaints been patiently heard and wisely redressed. This unfortunately was not the case; and not many years later, that *revolution* followed, which, in the christian world, produced a series of events, which were to many the source of manifold evils, and to some of partial good. The cause of literature was, eventually, benefited. But could it have been thus benefited by this alone? Or was the character of the northern nations really become so torpid, that nothing short of a general combustion blown up by the breath of a Saxon friar could have roused their minds into action?

I believe, that the effect might not have been so rapid: but when I look to the state of Italy, as it then was, and to the state of France, as it soon would be—I can say with confidence, that genuine literature and the polite arts must shortly have revisited all the European kingdoms, even though no such revolution, as has been called the *Reformation*, had intervened, to inflame and convulse the moral state of

Christendom. In that case, it is pleasing to recollect that —without civil or religious strife, and without those seeds of animosity being engendered, which no time is likely to eradicate—we should have seen abuses corrected; ignorance dispelled; rights maintained; learning restored; the arts keeping possession of our temples; and, in our own country, those noble edifices, the monuments of the generous piety of our ancestors, preserved from destruction, and made the asylums not of monkish indolence, but of studious ease, modest worth, and christian philosophy. Conclusion.

APPENDIX.

N°. 1.

ON THE LEARNING OF THE GREEKS, FROM THE SIXTH CENTURY, TO THE FALL OF THE EASTERN EMPIRE, IN 1453.

SIXTH CENTURY: THE REIGN OF JUSTINIAN—THE EFFECTS OF THEOLOGICAL CONTROVERSIES—TRIBONIAN AND PROCOPIUS, ETC.—THE LEARNING OF JUSTINIAN—HIS TASTE FOR BUILDING—SAINT SOPHIA—THE SEVENTH CENTURY—STATE OF THINGS UNDER HERACLIUS—A NEW CONTROVERSY—FEW WRITERS OF ANY NOTE—EIGHTH CENTURY—ICONOCLASM—LOW STATE OF LEARNING—ST. JOHN DAMASCENE—THE NINTH CENTURY MORE AUSPICIOUS TO LEARNING—THE PATRIARCH NICEPHORUS—ATTEMPTS OF MICHAEL THE STAMMERER—BARDAS FAVOURS THE CAUSE OF LETTERS—PHOTIUS—HIS PRINCIPAL WORKS—THE EMPERORS BASIL AND LEO—TENTH CENTURY: CONSTANTINE PORPHYROGENITUS—SIMEON METAPHRASTES—SUIDAS—THE EMBASSY OF LIUTPRAND—ELEVENTH CENTURY: STATE OF THE EMPIRE—MICHAEL PSELLUS—ALEXIUS COMNENUS—THE FIRST CRUSADE—TWELFTH CENTURY: JOHN COMNENUS—JOHN ZONARAS—NICEPHORUS BRYENNIUS—ANNA COMNENA—MANUEL COMNENUS—SECOND CRUSADE

MANUEL FOND OF CONTROVERSY — EUSTATHIUS, THE COMMENTATOR OF HOMER — ATHENÆUS — JOHN TZETZES — THE CLOSING EVENTS OF THE CENTURY — THIRTEENTH CENTURY — CONSTANTINOPLE TAKEN BY THE LATINS — MONUMENTS OF ART DESTROYED — THE EFFECTS OF THE CAPTURE ON LEARNING — GOOD CONDUCT OF THE EXPELLED PRINCES — NICETAS AND OTHER WRITERS — STATE OF THE GREEK EMPIRE AFTER ITS RESTORATION — FOURTEENTH CENTURY — LITERARY CHARACTER OF ANDRONICUS — THEODORUS METOCHITA — JOHN CANTACUZENUS — NICEPHORUS GREGORUS — A CURIOUS CONTROVERSY — PROGRESS OF THE TURKS — GREEK ANTHOLOGIES — FIFTEENTH CENTURY — THE QUESTION OF UNION BETWEEN THE CHURCHES — COUNCIL OF FERRARA AND FLORENCE — THE GREEKS RETURN FROM FLORENCE — FALL OF THE EASTERN EMPIRE — ITS THREE LAST HISTORIANS — STATE OF THE GREEK LANGUAGE.

APP. I.

WHILST learning was extinguished in the western regions of Europe, was the Grecian empire, as it verged to its fall, immersed in the same shade of ignorance and barbarism? It appeared to me that this, amongst others, was a question, which, it seemed to me, that the reader of these pages would be naturally inclined to ask. So long as the connection was maintained, between Rome and the East, and we could read and admire the literary productions of the latter, it was easy, as these commanded attention, to follow their progress in an unbroken series. They even claimed a place, which, in a well arranged system, could not be withheld. But the times soon altered. The language of Greece ceased to be understood; and its writers could no longer, with propriety, be introduced. Their introduction, which I more than once attempted, would have marred that unity of plan which I was anxious to preserve. But though I have not abruptly called the reader off from the concerns of the Grecian schools, I fear that he will

too often have experienced the unpleasant sensation of unprepared and sudden transitions.

Towards the close of the fifth century—when the empire of the west had fallen—we left the Greeks in the possession of the literary eminence which they had so long maintained; their language still pure; taste, elegance, and judgment discernible in the works which they composed; and the arts, as far as they were encouraged, powerfully aided by their ingenuity. It did not occur to me, at the time, to remark it, as a singular incident, that, even when the Latin language was in its highest cultivation, no Greek seems to have studied this language; much less to have attempted to write it. They lived at Rome, they were patronised with a lavish partiality, and often wrote on the immediate concerns of the Roman empire; but Greek was the language which they employed. In the meantime the Latins, so long as any taste remained amongst them, did not cease to admire, and to cultivate the language of Greece.

It may be asked, what effect, or if any effect, was produced on this language, by the translation of the imperial throne from Italy to Byzantium? Constantine was followed by a splendid court, composed of whatever was most conspicuous in talents and endowments, and taking with them the learning and the literary productions of their fathers. Some effect must thus necessarily have been produced: but as the number of these strangers was comparatively small, and a long prevailing fashion had taught them to prefer the arts and the letters of Greece, they would be more anxious to copy what they saw and heard, and themselves to become Greeks, than to communicate to these, what they less valued, the Latin language

APP. I.

or its best productions. I know not indeed, if this translation of empire did not itself contribute to give new strength and lustre to the Greek tongue. Placed between Europe and Asia, Byzantium became, from this period, the great centre to which learned men, who were before dispersed and unconnected, could resort; receive the rewards due to their labours; and stimulate each other's activity by mutual collision. That the Greek language, at least, was preferred even by those, whose future prospects might have induced them to give equal attention to that of Rome, is evinced by the remarkable fact—that it was the idiom in which the Emperor Julian, who lived much in the West, and was governor of Gaul, conversed and wrote.

Its richness, and its harmony, had, doubtless, peculiar charms; but the great mine of knowledge was to be found in its writers. From this mine we shall see *, that, during the most resplendent period of the Caliphate, the disciples of Mahomet, while they severed member after member from the Byzantine empire, even deigned to draw such stores of science, as could best improve and augment their own stock. Nor were the Greeks thrifty in their contributions. They became their teachers; and they laid at their feet the volumes of their sages, reviving the recollection of former days, when the Latin world frequented the schools of Greece, and was indebted to her for the most valued treasures of refinement, elegance, and taste. Whilst she thus profusely bestowed her favours on

* See Append. II.

her enemies, it cannot be supposed that she was negligent of her self-cultivation; or that holding in her hands the riches of her fathers, she permitted the spirit which amassed that sacred patrimony, to sink into lifeless apathy. APP. I.

The Sixth Century: the Reign of Justinian.

During the thirty-eight years of the reign of Justinian, from 527 to 565—a prince of talents, who, amongst the noblest objects of ambition, disdained not the less illustrious name of poet and philosopher, lawyer and theologian, musician and architect—it might have been expected, that literature and the arts could have claimed no patronage which would not be liberally bestowed. Few works, however, of any eminence appeared, if we except the laborious compilations on jurisprudence, under the titles of the *Code*, the *Digest* or *Pandects*, the *Institutes*, and *Novella*, which were partly extracted from the writings of former civilians, and digested into a complete system of law, by the great scholar and statesman Tribonian, with the assistance of other eminent men. Justinian espoused their labours as connected with his own glory; while, in other respects he has been represented as an enemy to philosophy*; when, by an edict, he imposed a perpetual silence on the schools of Athens, under the idea, that heathenism was still inculcated in the lectures of its professors; and when, from rapacity, or rather, it may be said, from the real want of money to complete the expensive edifices in which he was engaged, he listened to the pitiful suggestions of mercenary counsellors, and confiscated the stipends, which, in many

* See Brucker, Hist. Crit. Philos. t. III. p. 533. Edit. Lipsiæ an. 1743.

APP. I. cities, had been appropriated, from a remote period, to the use of the masters of the liberal arts. Rusticity, says the writer * from whom I take the fact, now invaded the former seats of learning, as, when the schools of Athens were closed, the grief and indignation of the votaries of science were loudly heard, and its professors emigrated to Persia.

The Effects of Theological Controversies.

But if letters ceased at this time to be cultivated with less ardour, a more substantial reason may be assigned for the event, than the discouraging edict or the rapacity of Justinian. Let the religious controversies, the violence with which they were conducted, the characters of those controversies, and the numbers of all ranks and professions, who eagerly engaged in them, be considered, from the emperor to the lowest mechanic in the streets of Constantinople, and it will be seen, that from the contagious nature of popular discussions, few minds could keep themselves free from party influence; that the greatest talents had a new field opened before them, on which fame might be obtained, and many passions be gratified. The pages of their admired poets, their orators, or their historians, might continue, occasionally, to engage a vacant hour; but more powerful motives would incessantly recall their attention to the subjects of controversy. These may, to us, seem void of all interest: whether, for example, the great Origen, long before dead, and his doctrines should be condemned; whether the *three chapters*, as they were denominated, that is, the writings of three Oriental bishops, themselves also long at rest in the

---

† Zonaræ Annal. in Justin. but he lived as late as the twelfth century. See Bib. G. l. v. c. 42. t. x.

grave, merited anathematization; and whether it could be properly said, that one of the Trinity suffered on the cross? APP. I.

The royal theologian entered into these disputes; their character was congenial with his temper and understanding; and what spectator could be indifferent, when Justinian solicited the sanction of his voice? While the barbarians invaded his provinces; or while his victorious legions marched under the banners of Belisarius and Narses---this successor of Cæsar sat in council, in order to define the evanescent shades of some metaphysical distinction. If flatterers applauded his sagacity, or if, as the annals of the times attest, the public mind was induced by his example to cherish no pursuits, but those of theology; there were men, who, when other calls predominated, could deride the occupations of the imperial wrangler. "He truly must be a coward," observed a conspirator to his associate, "who can fear to draw his sword against Justinian, while, without any guard, he sits whole nights in his closet, debating with reverend grey-beards, and turning over the pages of ecclesiastical volumes*." Even his empress, the sensual Theodora, who differed from her royal consort on the monophysite question, could not escape the general contagion; and not merely the capital and the provinces, but the palace and the nuptial bed, were convulsed by spiritual discord.

This polemical fervor was principally kindled by the Arian

* Procop. de Bell. Goth. l. III. c. 32. I shall speak of him hereafter.

APP. I. controversy, in the fourth century, and we may follow it, as it was upheld through the succeeding æra, when the followers of Nestorius and Eutychus disturbed or divided the faith of the eastern world. The genius of that people, as it was irritable and litigious, was keen, penetrating, and subtle. Hence no question could be exhausted; new matter would daily arise; and the same source was seen to branch into a hundred streams. The ramifications of the leading heresies of Nestorius and Eutychus alone, could not readily be numbered. The emperors, who became parties in every dispute, in vain issued edicts; and councils, with no better success, promulgated their decrees. They served to impart importance to opinions, which ridicule or contempt might, perhaps, have silenced. They united the combatants in firmer array; and by exciting pity or popularity, they sometimes multiplied the means of annoyance and defence: whilst every man of talents, who was enlisted in the ranks of controversy, might be deemed a loss to the cause of literature.

During the reign of Justinian, various sects still subsisted which had fomented divisions in the christian church, though often persecuted and afflicted. In Persia, and in some provinces of the empire, the Manicheans maintained, and disseminated their dangerous opinions. While the Vandals held Africa, the Donatists enjoyed freedom and tranquillity. Under the various princes of the Gothic line, the Arians might be said to triumph. In Persia, in India, Armenia, Arabia, Syria, and other countries beyond the limits of the Roman Empire—for so the Greeks affected to style their falling state—the Nestorians, with a patriarch at their head, continued to propagate their tenets, and to multiply their churches.

Sometimes, indeed, they were treated with severity, but they were more frequently indulged by their respective sovereigns, as men, whom oppression had rendered cordially adverse to their former masters.

The Eutychians, or Monophysites, though long distracted by intestine feuds, possessed an extensive sway, and were patronised even in the court of Byzantium, as was seen in the opening of the sixth century, by the emperor Anastasius; and afterward, as I remarked, by Theodora; whilst in many of the remoter provinces, and in many kingdoms, they soon enjoyed all the influence of an established church *.

Into whatever regions the ministers of these various sects travelled, or wherever they sojourned, the Greek language was the vehicle of their opinions or their eloquence; and had their minds been as enlightened as their zeal was ardent, while they charmed their hearers with the euphonies of that tongue, they would have allured them to its acquirement, or would at least have diffused among them, by translations, those stores of taste and erudition with which it was enriched. But their zeal was actuated by less worthy views of interest or ambition; or, perhaps, to speak more candidly, of making proselytes to their faith, and thus of giving to it more extension and permanence. It seldom has, I believe, happened, that men, possessed by a sectarian spirit—however refined the

* See on these subjects Mosheim, vol. II. or any other ecclesiastical writers.

APP. I.

taste which early education had infused into their minds—either retained it during the operation of that spirit, or felt a wish to communicate any portion of it to their followers. A mind polished by literature, or expanded by liberal sentiment, is ill-qualified to listen to coarse declamation, or to embrace a contracted and uncharitable creed.

When, by the edict of Justinian, and other oppressive acts, the beautiful reveries of Plato—to which great additions had been made by his modern followers, particularly in the schools of Alexandria—could no longer be publicly taught; they are said to have found an asylum * in the cells of the Asiatic monks. These monks were warmly attached to the memory of Origen, who was himself a Platonist; and manifested their ardour in his cause. But the use which they made of his lights, of those of the Grecian sage, or of his new disciples, was not to open their minds to the pure influence of a sublime theory, and to enlarge the boundaries of science; but to perplex the simple truths of christianity, to multiply recondite and allegorical interpretations, to affect a superiority to the inherent infirmities of human nature, and to establish a system of extravagant mysticism.

It seems that we should look, at this time, for the real state of Grecian learning, not in those academic retreats, where it had formerly been cultivated; but in the schools of theology, in the debates of councils, and in the works of those men,

* Hist. Crit. Phil. t. III. p. 533.—On the fate of Philosophy, through its various stages, this author must be consulted, t. II.

whose talents were exercised in the controversies of the age. Some years ago, when in quest of other objects, I turned over, and sometimes attentively perused many volumes, in which the subjects, to which I allude, were discussed. If I was compelled to admire the ease with which the fecundity of the Greek tongue could accommodate its silver tones and elegant phrases to the expression of ideas, often new, and often barbarous—it was still evident, that those who came forward as champions, while their attention was engaged in these popular questions, had neglected to derive taste from the genuine sources, where alone it could be found. That they were superior to the Latins in many respects could not be denied; and this superiority was in a great degree due to the language in which they spoke or wrote; and which, from the fortunate circumstance of having been kept free from a vitiating commixture, had still retained its primitive character.

Tribonian and Procopius, &c.

I mentioned the great civilian Tribonian, who was, indeed, a man of the most extensive learning, and whose genius has been said to have embraced all the knowledge of the age. He wrote both in prose and verse, on a heterogeneous medley of curious and abstruse subjects; and to the literature of Greece he added the use of the Latin tongue. It may even be observed of him, that the cause of letters flourished while he lived; and his vast compilation of the laws exhibited a style, which would not have dishonoured the best days of literature. It must, however, be remarked, as a highly curious incident, that the whole of his collection, many parts of the *Novella* excepted, was written in Latin; promulgated in the

APP. I. same language; and afterwards translated into Greek for the use of the people. It was the pride of Justinian to be thought the master of the Roman world, of the empire of which he now meditated the recovery; and he chose therefore, it seems, to enact his laws in its pristine language. The ancient legal sources, besides, from which the new code was collected, had circulated in that tongue; and we may be allowed, I think, from this circumstance, and still more from that of the new compilation being published in Latin, to infer, that the language of Rome continued to be understood, at least by the magistrates, and the learned men of Greece. It has been objected to the style of Tribonian and his associates, that it was too flowery for the general subject.

Some have conjectured that Stephanus of Byzantium, the grammarian, lived in the same reign of Justinian, or about that time; but as this is by no means certain, and only an epitome of his great geographical Lexicon is extant*, I proceed to Priscian, who has been elsewhere noticed. I mentioned him in another place, because, though a Greek, and at this time a celebrated teacher in Constantinople, his pen was chiefly employed in elucidating the grammar of the Latin tongue. Hence he has been esteemed amongst us as the prince of grammarians. But I here repeat his name, to confirm the observation which has just been made, that the Latin language, during the reign of Justinian, must have been

* Bib. G. l. IV. c. 2. t. III.

cultivated by the Greeks, when the laws of the empire were promulgated through that medium, and its grammar engaged the attention of their professors.

When I related some events of the Gothic war, conducted by the imperial General Belisarius, the authority of the historian Procopius, was often quoted, concerning whom I will now add, that he professed eloquence in Constantinople, accompanied Belisarius in his wars, and was afterwards raised to the rank of senator and præfect of the city. His works, which are chiefly historical, in eight books, comprise the events of the Persic, the Vandalic, and the Gothic wars. They are written with truth and elegance; and convey much important information. The events of the same reign, were continued by Agathias, in five books, and in a style of equal elegance.

In another work Procopius recorded the various buildings, which were raised or restored by his master, in the capital or the provinces, in the language of courtly adulation.

It has been doubted whether Procopius was the author of the *History* of the private life of Justinian, under the title of *Anecdotes*. If he was, such prevarication, after the praise which he had lavished on his sovereign, must not only sully the reputation of the man, but detract from the credit of the historian. He wrote the *Anecdotes*, it has been said, by way of retractation, in order to efface the wrong impressions which his praises of Justinian had made. But he who will flatter is not unlikely to calumniate. Whoever may have been the author of the *Anecdotes*, or whatever the degree of

APP. I. their truth, or their falsehood, they have served as a model to the many chronicles of abusive history which have since been published*.

Other writers, also coeval with Justinian, laboured to illustrate the events of his reign; and their works form a part of the great *Byzantine* collection †. Of this collection, critics have observed that, notwithstanding its supposed value, it has one serious defect, which is, that more than half of the authors, which it contains—with the exception of some few passages in which they do not copy one another—do not deserve to be read. Scarcely any one but Procopius is said to have written with a becoming dignity; and he had formed his style after the model of the ancients.

The Learning of Justinian.

But there was a dearth of such men as Procopius and Tribonian, in the line of elegant composition; while Justinian himself might, perhaps, be exhibited, as a just model of the general taste of his age. He was well experienced in the labyrinth of theological sophistry; discerned the bearings of many intricate questions; could descant on them with

---

* See Bib. Græca, l. v, c. 5, t. VI.

† This collection (thirty-six volumes in folio), in Greek and Latin, proceeded from the royal press of the Louvre, in the reign of Louis XIV. There is also a more recent Venetian edition, more copious, but less magnificent. The German Hanckius (De Scriptoribus, Hist. Byz. 4) has given a diffuse history of the Byzantine writers, from which Fabricius (Bib. Græca) extracted what he judged most fitting to complete his own valuable work, of which, the edition which I use, is that of Hamburgh, 1728.

facility, and even with some depth of thought; and, in his latter days, as he ranged through the metaphysical circle, he eagerly seized the opinion, "that the body of Christ was incorruptible," and that it was not subject to any of the wants and infirmities to which our mortal flesh is liable. This opinion was deemed heretical: but the royal controvertist carried it with him to the grave. Such was the learning of Justinian; and the mind which could revel in such pursuits, would be little qualified to appretiate the value, much less to enjoy the pleasures, which arise from the various branches of elegant composition.—Had Justinian any taste for the arts?

His Taste for Building.

Without recurring to facts, the question might perhaps be at once solved by the character which I have given of his mind; but it is probable, that he was, sometimes, induced to surrender his own judgment to the superior taste of his artists. The erection of costly edifices may announce the prosperity of an empire, or serve to gratify ambition, or be the effect of a more mischievous passion. Whatever were the views of Justinian, the number of buildings which he erected, even taking into our consideration the resources of a long reign, almost exceed belief. And of these architectural labours it has been too harshly said*: "that they were cemented with the *blood* and treasure of his people." His pious munificence was seen in the construction of churches;

* Hist. of the Decline and Fall, vol. IV. p. 88.

APP. I. whilst almost every city in the empire obtained the solid advantages of bridges, hospitals, and aqueducts; and he consulted his own ease in the restoration of the palace at Byzantium. There was every-where a display of magnificence, and of the most costly ornaments.

St. Sophia. But it is in the temple, now the mosque, of Saint Sophia, which was originally raised by Constantine, but rebuilt from the foundations by Justinian, that we are to look for all the skill, taste, and munificence of the age. It had been twice destroyed by fire; but it was now to rise resplendent on an improved and extended scale. The principal architect was Anthemius, who presided over the imperial works. He formed the design, and it is said, that his genius directed the hands of ten thousand workmen. Justinian, clad in a linen tunic, every day surveyed the rapid progress; and six years had not elapsed, when he had the happiness to behold its completion, and to assist at its solemn consecration. After some years, however, an earthquake overthrew the eastern part of the dome. The perseverance of the same prince again restored its splendour, and, in the thirty-sixth year of his reign, he celebrated the second dedication of a temple, which, after twelve centuries, remains a stately monument of his fame.

Of this celebrated structure, of its *aerial* dome, lightly reposing on arches, its columns of granite, of porphyry, and of green marble, its semi-domes, its walls encrusted with marbles, its various members, admirable by their size and beauty, and all embellished by a rich profusion of jaspers, gems, and precious metals—I shall not repeat the descrip-

tions which many authors will supply *. But though this venerable pile, which could excite the admiration of the Greeks, even now as shorn, by Turkish fanaticism, or the corrosion of time, of its more perishable ornaments, continues to furnish a rich repast to the curiosity of the traveller, it is generally, I think, agreed, that a striking deficiency is often perceptible in the combinations and contrasts of parts; and that Anthemius, had he been content to copy the exquisite models which, in his time, still adorned the cities of Asia Minor and the provinces of Greece, might have produced a work which would at once have been more sublime and beautiful. But for this a refined nicety of taste was necessary; which was no longer to be found.

Besides Procopius and Agathias, who, in their histories, have described what they saw, Paul Silentiarius, or first secretary of Justinian, in a poem of one thousand and twenty-six hexameters, which, during the last Encænia, he publicly read to the Emperor, has likewise celebrated the temple of St. Sophia. "And should it be any one's wish," observed Agathias †, "though himself removed from the scene, to contemplate its various parts, let him cast his eyes on this poem."

During the reigns of the successors of Justinian, to the

The Seventh Century.

* See the Hist. of the Decline and Fall, vol. IV. p. 91—96; whose words, in speaking of St. Sophia, I have minutely copied.

† Hist. l. v. See Bib. G. l. v. c. 5. t. VI.

APP. I. close of the century, little is said of letters; and the seventh opened with the tyrant Phocas, when, at the expiration of eight years, Heraclius was called to the imperial throne. He reigned thirty-one years.

State of Things under Heraclius. In the Persian war, which ended not till after a bloody period of more than twenty years, during the first progress of which, the empire was brought to the brink of ruin, by the conquest of its provinces, Heraclius proved himself a hero. But the continuance of such a war, though finally crowned with a complete triumph over the mighty Chosroes, was highly destructive not only to population, and agriculture, but to letters and the arts. Every sinew of the empire was employed in its defence; the anxiety of self-preservation, as we observed in the fall of the Western kingdoms, precluded every other thought; and literature sustained an irreparable loss in the destruction of libraries and of the general means of mental cultivation. I lamented the theological warfare of Justinian, which, engrossing the public attention, averted it from objects of higher importance; though, it must be allowed, that talents were exercised, and the intellectual faculty quickened by the debates of polemics. When the fashion of the day should change, the volumes of elegant literature might again be opened, and a fresh career of excellence again be run. In a war, which had now desolated the empire, even to the gates of its capital and before the fervour of controversy had cooled, what was there in the common order of things, which could excite the expectation of better days?

After the exploits of six glorious campaigns, Heraclius

might justly be entitled to enjoy the pleasures of repose; but, in that period, he was unfortunately prevailed upon, to abet the views of an insidious party, and, under the notion of conciliating differences, to espouse an opinion, which again set the churches of Christendom in a flame; and that at a time, when a new enemy had arisen in the followers of Mahomet, who, when eighteen years of the hegira had scarcely elapsed, had made a dreadful irruption into the empire.

A New Controversy.

To convey to the reader, who is not versed in ecclesiastical records, some further notion of the questions which were now agitated, and of the extreme refinement of Grecian subtlety, it may not be unacceptable to him to know—That, in a general council at Ephesus, in 431, it was defined against Nestorius, that in Christ was *one person* only; and at Chalcedon, in 451, against Eutyches, that, in the same Christ, were *two natures*. But the Nestorians still maintained, that, if an unity of persons were admitted, an unity in the natures followed; while the Eutychians insisted that, if there were two natures, there must be two persons: thus reproaching the councils, in the condemnation of each heresy, with the admission of the respective opinions of the heresiarchs. If the two natures, after the union, remained really distinct, *how* did they form one person? This was the grand problem, in the solution of which the Greek intellect had in vain exerted all its powers of subtle disputation. Might not the human nature, they now began to reason, though distinct from the divine, be in such a manner united to it, as to retain no proper action; so that the *Logos* was the sole active principle; whilst the human will was absolutely passive, guided and impelled by the divine will, as an

APP. I.

instrument in the hand of the artist? There is but one person, they proceeded to reason, as Ephesus defined: but in one person there can be but one willing, one determining principle; a plurality of such principles would constitute a plurality of persons: therefore, in Jesus Christ there is but one energy, one action, one will. The divine and human natures, as Chalcedon defined, are indeed two; but there cannot be two acting principles, unless two persons, as Nestorius asserted, be admitted. The proposition then is true, "That in Christ, after the union of the two natures, there is but one will, and one operation." And they concluded that this doctrine, while it enforces the definitions of the two councils, must tend to reconcile the adverse parties, or must silence the reproaches, which they have hitherto uttered. The Nestorians cannot say, that *we* confound the natures, because we maintain, that they are distinct, and that the human is subordinate to the divine; nor can the Eutychians say, that we establish two persons, because, as is evident, we admit but one acting principle, one operation, *one will.*

It was this doctrine, called *Monothelitism*, which Heraclius espoused, with a view of conciliation, and prompted to the measure by the advice of Sergius, the patriarch of Byzantium. Its tendency to Eutychianism could hardly be mistaken, and it was afterwards adopted by the patriarch of Alexandria, and, on the representation of Sergius, by the Roman Bishop Honorius. But the intention of the latter, though he explicitly admitted the doctrine, was to repress all further disputes, by adopting a system of general silence. Amongst the churches of apostolic foundation, the new

tenet was resisted only by Sophronius of Jerusalem. Had the advisers of Heraclius been sincere, they would have persevered in the silence which they first recommended; but it is plain, that their wish was to advance a favourite doctrine, and to procure its enforcement by imperial authority. A mandate was, therefore, issued under the name of *Ecthesis* or exposition, which, professing to impose on all persons a law of silence, in the use of certain obnoxious expressions, announced Monothelitism, without farther reserve, as the doctrine of truth.

War being thus proclaimed, the several combatants, eagerly took sides, as the influence of particular motives happened to preponderate. The western church was engaged; the successors of Heraclius, particularly his grandson Constans, supported the same measures; a Roman synod fulminated anathemas, whilst it announced its orthodox faith. And finally, in 680, a sixth general council, assembled at Constantinople, which was patronised by the reigning emperor Constantine Pogonatus, who had relinquished the errors of his fathers, confirmed the decisions of Rome; and involving many prelates of the East, and the Roman bishop Honorius in the same sentence, consigned their names to execration. But till a new controversy arose in the beginning of the next century, it could not fairly be pronounced, that the Grecian mind was withdrawn from these abstruse speculations.

In accounting for the motives, which gave such a vigorous impulse to these inquiries, I omitted to mention the final close of the schools of philosophy. These had furnished perpetual

APP. I. occupation to the public mind. But what has been called the golden chain of succession, which bound together the disciples of the modern Platonists, was broken in Syria, in Greece, or in Egypt; Gentilism was completely cast down; and the cloak of the philosopher was no longer deemed, as it had been in former days, a graceful covering to the shoulders of the christian. As the studies of the philosophers ceased, the controversies, which I described, were ready to give employment to talents of every species; if the rise of these controversies may not itself be viewed, as the principal incident in the tissue of causes, which effected the downfal of philosophy*. I would not, however, be thought to mean, that the philosophy of Aristotle was also fallen into disrepute; for it was under his direction, or rather with the use of his logical subtilties, that the points in litigation were so eagerly maintained.

Few Writers of any Note.

The very concise list of those who wrote in every branch of profane learning, and the uninteresting character of their writings---if we except the "prolix and florid" *History* of the Emperor Mauritius, by Theophylact Simocatta---release the critic from the task of animadversion. This work was written about the year 628, and in eight books, records the events of the reign of Mauritius, terminating in 602. The affectation and allegory of the style have been censured. A dialogue is introduced in the preface, in which philosophy and

* The laborious pen of Brucker (t. III.) is now at a loss for matter.

history, having seated themselves under a plane-tree, and the latter having touched her lyre, complain, that they had both been neglected under the tyrant Phocas; but when Heraclius had seized the sceptre, a more cheering prospect opened before them *. Their hopes, however, were frustrated; for our great historian and critic, as he begins the reign of Heraclius †, utters also his complaint: "We must now," he says, "for some ages, take our leave of contemporary historians, and descend, if it be a descent, from the affectation of rhetoric to the rude simplicity of chronicles and abridgments." The fate of philosophy was not more prosperous.

When we turn to the more copious stores of ecclesiastical learning, we find little to repay the labour of perusal. A turgid eloquence, observes an author ‡, whom I quote with pleasure, and an affected pomp and splendour of style, which cast a perplexing obscurity over subjects which are in themselves the most perspicuous, formed the highest point of perfection to which genius aspired. They received, with the most indiscriminate indifference, the most vulgar reports concerning the events of ancient times, and of those composed the *Lives* of several saints, compilations which have, with truth, been defined to be "a heap of insipid and ridiculous fables, void often of the least air of probability, and without the smallest tincture of eloquence."

* See Bib. G. L. v. c. v. t. VI. † Hist. of Decl. and Fall, vol. IV. p. 500.

‡ Mosheim. Eccles. Hist. vol. II. p. 167.

APP. I.

I chiefly allude to a work of John Moschus, entitled, the *Meadow* or *New Paradise*, written in a low and barbarous style. He was himself a monk, who, early in this century, having visited the cells of the Cœnobites in Syria and Egypt, and even travelled into the west, undertook to relate the wonderful lives of the recluses whom he had seen, or of whose singular austerities and modes of life he had been informed. Not satisfied with the simple truth of many extraordinary facts, Moschus intermixed much matter which we must necessarily deem fabulous; but which found readers, in that and in a subsequent period, as ignorance spread her veil of darkness, and the *Meadow* itself soon proved a fertile repository, from which the Latins drew many stores with the utmost avidity.

It is worthy of remark, as a curious fact in the history of man, that, in proportion to his intellectual degradation, no narrative gives any delight which is not distorted by tales of wonder, the glare of the marvellous, and the most incongruous perversions both of taste and of truth. But let me not omit to mention, that while Moschus was thus employed, a contemporary monk, called John Climacus*, with a view to perfect the ascetic life, exhibited a series of maxims in a work of great fame, entitled, *Climax*, or the *Ladder of Paradise*, which has formed the text book of many scholia and even massy commentaries.

When works like the *Meadow* of Moschus are not rejected,

* On these two writers, see Dupin, Bib. Eccles. Siecle VII.

and they would not be written, were rejection apprehended, they form a criterion by which our opinions may be safely regulated. We may determine, that the art of criticism was neglected, that is, that writers had ceased to be governed by the rules of good sense; and that readers were better pleased with extravagant fictions than with the sober statements of reality and truth. From the character of this popular work, and from other unerring symptoms, we may infer, that the general tone of the Grecian taste was, at this time, extremely low; and that, if it still maintained a level somewhat superior to that of the west, the superiority arose from the dispositions of a people naturally animated and sprightly, whose blood had been vitiated by no gross commixture, and whose language was yet pure.

The Eighth Century. Iconoclasm.

Not more than twenty years of the ensuing century, which were incessantly disturbed by commotions, had elapsed, when it appeared that the spirit of controversy, weakened by long exertions, was inclined to repose, and perhaps to contemplate even with some remorse the many evils, which it had blindly entailed on religion and the empire, when a man, whose life had hitherto been spent in the array of armies and in the field of battle, presented a new question, or rather gave a new importance to one, which had before been slightly agitated. This man was Leo the Isaurian, who was raised to the imperial throne in 716, and the founder of a new dynasty. In an assembly of senators and bishops he declared, and is soon afterwards said to have enacted, with their consent, that "the making of images was an unlawful act; and the veneration of them idolatry." Leo might

APP. I. have been seriously disgusted by the abuses of image worship, and was resolved to check its progress. Emulous of the theological fame of his predecessors, and himself incapable of abstruse disquisitions, he chose a subject, on which the most unlettered mind could reason with some plausibility: but the fact seems to have been, that the railleries and reproaches which were cast on the practice by the Jews and the disciples of Mahomet, had roused his indignation; and he was resolved to signalize his reign by its suppression *.

Scenes of extreme violence spreading from the capital to the provinces, ensued, the excesses of which might surprise a temperate observer, were he not aware, that moderation was no ingredient in the Grecian character; and that objects less allied to his feelings, than the statues and images of the venerable dead, had seemed often to engage his warmest attachments. No persuasions, nor the infliction of the severest chastisements, could prevail upon the people to comply with the orders of their prince. When he commanded the image to be taken from a favourite cross, the man, who undertook the work, was furiously assailed, was dashed upon the ground, and torn in pieces by the frantic women. The arts themselves had some reason to deplore the spirit of Iconoclasm, which, with an indiscriminate rage, often destroyed many beautiful monuments of taste. A second edict had pro-

* See Baronius, Annal. an. 726.

scribed the existence, as well as the use, of religious images; and whenever it could be carried into execution, they were demolished, or a smooth surface of plaster was spread over the walls.

If there be truth in the statement of a later writer *, literature itself, low as its condition was, had ample cause of lamentation. A royal edifice, he says, had been erected, in which many volumes of profane and sacred learning were deposited; and where, from ancient times, *he* was allowed to dwell, who, having proved his superiority in letters, was styled the œcumenical doctor. His associates were twelve other learned men, who were maintained at the public expense, to whom, whoever was ambitious of acquiring knowledge, resorted; and whom the emperors themselves consulted in the business of the state. Leo would have deemed the accomplishment of his designs no longer uncertain, if the sanction of these men could have been obtained. He laid before them his views; he made use of caresses, and of threats. But when nothing could prevail he dismissed them; and commanding the building to be surrounded with dry wood, consumed them and the rich treasure which they guarded, of thirty thousand volumes, in the flames.

Candour will receive with caution this account, which is unsupported by any contemporary evidence, but we are com-

* Zonaras Annal. t. III. sub Leone Isaur.—A Greek monk who wrote in the twelfth century.

APPEAL pelled, by less questionable authority *, to look on the Isaurian, as a tyrant impatient of controul. When he experienced any resistance, he deemed no vengeance too severe—however venerable the object, for age, for piety, for science, or for birth.—"The schools devoted to education were closed, and the means of acquiring knowledge extinguished, that had flourished from the times of the great Constantine."

The news of the hostile attacks on images, when carried into Italy, excited commotions in that country: those of the emperor, which it had been customary to exhibit, were contemptuously beaten down, and treated with indignity: armies even were raised, which vauntingly talked of electing another emperor, and of conveying him in triumph to Constantinople. This was an idle menace; but as the minds of the Italians were daily more and more alienated from the Byzantine government, these proceedings served to give birth to the design which the Roman bishops soon eagerly embraced, of imploring the aid of the Franks, and of withdrawing their fealty from a court which could no longer protect them.

This ignoble contest concerning image-worship continued through the twenty-four years of the reign of Leo; and was perpetuated through the longer reign of his son, Constantine V. And, with short pauses of intermission, it was protracted into the following century, though, in 787, the empress, Irene, who

* Hist. Miscel. l. xxi. inter Rer. Ital. Script. Paul. Diac. Hist. Longobard. l. vi. c. 49. ibid.

had declared herself the friend of images, procured, in their favour, the celebration of the second orthodox synod of Nice. APP. I.

Low State of Learning.

Were the reader curious to peruse any productions of the age, as a sample of its literature, I should be disposed to refer him to the writings which the image-controversy provoked *. When the mind is most animated, its efforts are most vigorous and energetic; and what is then done may be considered as a just criterion of its powers. I will not anticipate the judgment of others; but I may be allowed to say, that nothing written on that controversy, or on any other subject, can free the eighth century from the heavy censure which was merited by the preceding. Frigid homilies, it has been remarked †; insipid narrations of the exploits of some pretended worthies; vain and subtle disputes about unessential and trivial subjects; vehement and bombastic declamations for and against the erection and worship of images; histories composed without method or judgment—such were the monuments of Grecian learning in this deluded age.

III.

St. John Damascene.

St. John Damascenus, as a theologian and a philosopher, a man of genius and of eloquence, while he illustrated many points of the Christian doctrine, in a variety of productions, which are not void of erudition, and signalized himself in defence of images, contributed in no small degree to the illustra-

* They may be found, Latin as well as Greek, in the Acts of the Seventh Council.

† Mosheim Cent. VIII. c. 1.

tion and progress of the Aristotelian philosophy. Born at Damascus, while that city was the principal seat of the Saracenic empire, he held no inconsiderable office in the service of the caliph. But as he had a predilection for retirement, he withdrew to a cell near Jerusalem, where he devoted his days to study. The work which he composed on the doctrines of the Stagirite, for the instruction of the more ignorant, and in a manner adapted to common capacities, has been pronounced to be, concise, plain, and comprehensive. It excited many, both in Greece and Syria, to the study of that philosophy; and the author himself, from the use which he made of it on other occasions, has been deemed, if not the first, at least, among the first, who adopted a philosophic method in treating the points of christian belief, and engrafted Peripateticism on theology. Hence some have numbered the Damascene among the parents of the numerous family of scholastics, who soon filled all the christian schools. To make the genius of Aristotle subservient to the interests of a cause, the simple character of which seemed to have so little occasion for his aid, might have been thought as ingenious, as it was arduous; but let others decide, whether that cause was more benefited by the attempt, than it had previously been by its forced alliance with the theories of Plato *.

The attachment of John Damascenus to the pursuits of science, and particularly to the process of reasoning prescribed by the rules of Aristotle, should, it seems, have given solidity

* Dupin Bib. Eccles. siecle VIII. Cave Hist. Lit. Brucker Hist. Crit. t. III. p. 534. Bib. G. l. v. c. 30. t. VIII.

to the judgment, have curbed the fancy, and, with respect to facts and opinions, have encouraged a severe and critical caution; but, while he is charged by some with a sordid superstition, and an excessive veneration for all which the ancient fathers had asserted, men of more moderation cannot conceal his credulity. "In many of his writings," candidly owns Baronius *, "our belief is staggered, while falsehoods are unsparingly scattered." When a writer, who was confessedly the most learned of his age, can be thus accused, we want no other proof of its degeneracy. He died about the year 750.

Among the few writers in the Byzantine series, who lived about this time, and who compiled *Chronicles*, not the least considerable are George Syncellus and his continuator, Theophanes; of whom the first, beginning with the creation, comes no further than the year 285 of our æra, whilst the second, starting from this period, continued the work to the year 813. In regard to style and accuracy of narration, the standard of these chronicles, particularly of that of Theophanes, though, in some parts, deserving of praise, is not much above the level of their contemporaries in the western world †.

The Ninth Century more auspicious to Learning.

It may then seem, on a fair comparison between the east and west, that a deplorable approximation was threatened: and when a writer of great eminence‡, whose days had been spent in

* Annal. ad an. 31. n. 75.

† See Cave Hist. Lit. also Bib. G. l. v. c. iv. t. vi.

‡ Brucker Hist. Crit. t. iii. p. 536.

APP. I. literary research, does not hesitate to affix the epithet *barbarous* to the æra on the history of which he enters, the scene, I own, opens with nothing alluring to the view. But the reproach belongs to the last, rather than to the ninth century, for, besides the evidence which facts will establish, the same author himself admits, that towards the middle of its course, some light shone on general literature, and on philosophy. It may then, I think, be said, that the ninth century was, in many regards, an auspicious period. It opened in the west with the splendid undertakings of Charlemagne; in the East, properly so called, where the Abbassidæ reigned, and in other parts of the Saracenic empire, science and the muses prospered in mutual harmony. At Byzantium we shall behold a great character arise, the author indeed of many troubles, but the friend of learning, and himself profoundly learned; while many others were engaged in the generous office of communicating to the Arabian schools the various stores of science with which themselves had been enriched.

The Patriarch Nicephorus.

Under the weak or wicked princes, who filled the throne through many years of this century, all taste for letters, had it depended on them, must have been more and more extinguished, and all zeal for their cultivation at an end. But there were churchmen endowed with better minds, the protectors and friends of science, among whom Nicephorus the patriarch of Constantinople was eminently conspicuous. Having received from nature, ever beneficent to the Greeks, more than common talents, he carried them to the highest point of improvement of which they were susceptible; was employed in offices of trust; was promoted to the Byzantine chair: but when Leo, called the Armenian, renewed the image-con-

troversy, he strenuously resisted his edicts, and was sent into exile. Among his principal works is an *Abridgment of History*, from the death of Mauritius, in 602, to the year 769, which may be read as a continuation of that of Theophylact Simocatta, and of which an eminent judge * has pronounced, that its style has nothing superfluous, nothing obscure; that the words are well chosen, and its general composition, neither too diffuse nor too compressed, as might be expected in a scholar whose taste had been formed upon the best models. He omits recent facts if not supported by evidence; he copies those of ancient date when their truth has been confirmed. His narrative is agreeable; and, if he has not left many of his predecessors in history behind him we must ascribe it to a brevity which is incompatible with many beauties of elegant composition.

I find, also, chiefly in the ecclesiastical annals, the names of other men famed for various learning; but who, engaging with new vigour in the revived controversy, expended in it all the stores of science, which had been acquired through a life of labour. The monk Theodorus, called Studites, was at the head of these; and though image-worship, as the chief monuments of the age attest, could number the most eminent scholars amongst its patrons, Theodorus far surpassed them all in zeal and violence †.

* Photius. Biblioth. cod. 66. See also Bib. G. l. v. c. 5. t. VI.

† See Baron. Annal. sec. IX. passim. Also Bib. G. l. v. c. 33. t. IX.

APP. I.

Attempts of Michael the Stammerer.

But when the second Michael, distinguished by the ignoble name of *Stammerer*, occupied the throne—a prince of low vices, and to whom not only the knowledge, but even the name of letters was odious—he embraced the plan of stifling all the powers of mind in the germ, lest their future growth might reproach him with his ignorance. So hostile, says the historian*, was he to learning, that he would not allow the youth to be instructed. He feared lest they might thence derive effectual means of judging of the folly of his actions, or, by learning to read, surpass the attainments of their emperor; for so slow was he in the arrangement of his syllables, that while he put together the letters of his own name, another might with ease peruse a volume.

Bardas favours the Cause of Letters.

I pass over the reign of his son and successor Theophilus, to come to that of Michael III., than whom a more vile and flagitious monster had not disgraced the purple since the days of Nero and Eliogabalus. Yet it was in this reign that the light, of which I spoke, began to dawn. That he might not be disturbed in his career of pleasure, Michael had entrusted the reins of government to his uncle Bardas, a prince of slender talents, and of no literary acquirements; but who knew their value, and became their protector. He was sensible, it is said, how prejudicial the disgraceful ignorance which had prevailed had been to the interests of the empire; and he beheld with pain the splendour of science which now surrounded the throne of the Caliphs. "Philosophy," says the

* Zonaras Annal. in Michael.

historian *, "lay neglected, and, in a manner, so extinct, that not a spark was visible. The ignorance of our emperors had caused it. Bardas opened schools for every art, appointed professors, and regulated their salaries, committing the superintendence to the philosopher Leo." Of this Leo, at one time bishop of Thessalonica, the same writer speaks in terms of high commendation, extolling his universal learning, and particularly his profound skill in astronomy and the mathematics, which had excited the admiration of the Arabians. In a letter to the late emperor Theophilus, the caliph Almamon had entreated, that Leo might be sent to reside for a short time at his court at Bagdad, during which he might impart to him some portion of his learning. He even expressed a wish to have come in person to Byzantium if it had been compatible with the avocations of his government. "And let not diversity of religion," he added, "nor diversity of country cause you to refuse my request. Do what friendship would demand from friends. In return I offer you a hundred weight of gold, a perpetual alliance, and peace." Theophilus rudely rejected the request, observing, that the sciences, which had shed lustre on the Roman name, should not be communicated to barbarians.

Under this illustrious instructor, who was prompt in diffusing the various learning, with which is own mind was stored, we are told that the schools flourished, and that science once more raised her head. Bardas inspired emulation by his pre-

* Zonar. Annal. l. III.

APP. I.

sence; and extending his views to the courts of justice, he was not less successful in restoring a due application to the study of the laws, which had experienced equal neglect. The praise which these exertions merited is not denied to Bardas; but his enemies say that this was the only praise to which he could justly pretend. His conduct, in other respects, was open to severe animadversions.

Photius.

In the year 858, Ignatius, the patriarch of Constantinople, having been expelled from his See by the machinations of Bardas, was succeeded by Photius—the great personage to whom I alluded as the ornament of the age.—He was distinguished by his birth, by the offices which he had discharged in the imperial court; but more by his erudition: and we cannot doubt, but that it was his instigation which had excited Bardas to become the patron of letters. We are told, that there was no art or science with which this universal scholar was not acquainted. He was without a competitor amongst his contemporaries; and was not unworthy to contend for the palm with the most learned of the ancients. We may readily grant that he was not devoid of ambition; but it cannot be shown that he willingly sacrificed the freedom of a secular and studious life for the post of honour, which was to him a post of vexation and of toil; and he himself declared, both in public and in his private correspondence, the reluctance with which he had obeyed the call of his friends. But no reliance can be placed upon the statements as they come from either party, distorted by prejudice, and aggravated by irritation. According to the representation of his enemies, Photius was possessed by every vice by which human nature can be debased; whilst, in the

estimation of his friends, all the virtues centered in his character, refined by education, and embellished by science.

It is foreign to my purpose to detail the incidents of the controversy that now opened, in which the court of Byzantium, the patriarchal sees of the eastern churches, priests, monks, and men of all ranks and ages, the prelates dependent on Rome, and at their head the Roman bishop himself, engaged with the most infuriated animosity. I will barely state, that, in 861, a synod at Constantinople, which was numerously attended, pronounced a formal sentence of deposition against Ignatius; that pope Nicolas become a party in the quarrel, in the highest tones of authority, announced his opposition to Photius, and, in a synod, after a revision of his cause and conduct, deprived him of all sacerdotal and clerical dignity; that Photius, emboldened by the strong countenance of his sovereign, having, in another synod, stated the crimes of Nicolas, deposed him in return; and proceeded to indite a list of charges against the whole Latin church; that, in 867, on the accession of Basil to the imperial throne, Photius was exiled, and Ignatius solemnly reinstated in the patriarchal chair; that, two years after this, with a view, it was said, of terminating all disputes, a council, called the eighth œcumenical, was convened at Constantinople, before which the exiled patriarch was summoned to appear. After different citations, he appeared in the fifth session; and standing in the lowest place, heard in silence the taunting questions which were asked; nor could any authority prevail upon him to answer the leading demand of the Roman delegates, which was—whether he would submit to the decrees of their pontiffs? He withdrew. In the seventh session, he again entered, leaning

APP. I.

on a staff. "Take that staff from him," exclaimed Marinus, one of the papal deputies: "it is an emblem of pastoral dignity, unbefitting him who is a wolf, and no shepherd." The staff was taken from his hand; when, after some questions, Photius exhorted the legates to repent of what they had done against him. They rejected the advice with indignation; and proposed other measures. "I have no answer to give to calumnies," were his last words. In this session anathemas were pronounced against him, and his adherents*.

Thus anathematised, separated from his relations, his family, his friends, his servants, and deprived of his books which he valued more than life, the forlorn prelate was again driven into exile. "The last privation," he complains in a letter to the Emperor, "a new and unheard of punishment, was invented for me." This was in the year 870. How long this state of exile continued, does not appear: but, after a lapse of not many years, he recovered the favour of his prince; was once more powerful in the palace; was entrusted with the education of the sons of Basil; and is said even to have exercised, though uniformly opposed by Ignatius, some of the functions of the patriarchal charge. Not satisfied with this reparation of honour, Basil again restored him to the vacant chair on the death of Ignatius in 878, and, after a series of curious transactions with the Pontiff, John VIII., effected his complete reconciliation with Rome. John

* I have followed in this account the original documents as copied by Baronius, Annal. Sac. IX.: also the acts of the Eighth Council, Conc. t. VI.

reversed the sentence of the œcumenical council; absolved Photius from all ecclesiastical censures; and received him "as bishop, as brother, as colleague;" under some conditions, however, which were artfully evaded. A Byzantine synod, attended by Roman legates, confirmed the proceeding *.

The triumph of Photius was complete; and though the successors of John shewed an inclination to renew hostilities, he was not much molested, till the accession of Leo in 886, whose education he had directed, and to whom he was probably indebted for the imposing name of *philosopher*.—He was banished, a second time, under the imputation of many crimes; but rather we may be allowed to think, in order that the path to the patriarchal chair to which Leo destined his own brother Stephen, might not be obstructed, by the presence of the lawful possessor. It is not certain how long Photius survived this last blow; but it should seem, till about the year 891.

Of the thirty years which had thus passed, since his first promotion to ecclesiastical dignities; those of repose which he experienced in his exile must have proved most grateful to Photius, had his mind, devoted as it was to study, been less attached to the scene of pre-eminence in which he found so little tranquillity. In this dignified station, indeed, there was room for the exercise of talents, whether in the intrigues

* See Baronius, Annal. Sac. IX.: also Fleury, Hist. Eccles. vol. XI. in 4to.

APP. I.

of negotiation, in the management of resources, or in the display of erudition. It is, however, not unentertaining to listen to his own statement, in a letter to Pope Nicolas*, early in the controversy, than which nothing was ever composed, more distinguished by its elegance or its art. In the most pleasing colours, and with much feeling, he describes the tranquil scenes, from which he had been forcibly torn, where he was surrounded by admiring friends, when it was his dearest occupation, to watch the labours of his scholars, to answer their questions, and to contemplate their proficiency. Some were intent on mathematical solutions; others discovered the track of truth by logical deductions; others were engaged in the more sublime study of the heavenly oracles, by which the mind might be disciplined in piety. "Such," says he, "was my society; with such companions was my house crowded: but what a change! I reflect with anguish on what is passed; and my eyes fill with tears; for, even before experience had taught the lesson, I well knew what cares, what solicitudes, what tumults, environed the patriarchal chair."

But he seems on no occasion, more consciously to have felt the superiority of his powers, than when he stood in silent dignity in the public synod, heedless of the accumulated insults with which he was assailed. His contemporaries allow him the praise of immense learning, but deny him virtue; modern writers say less of his moral character, as if

* Ap. Baron. ad an. 859.

sensible of its defects, and dwell on the uncommon splendour of his intellectual attainments. Look, they say, at his work, entitled the *Library*, which is a lasting monument of erudition; and you will, at once, discover the profound historian, the learned philologist, the acute critic. The *answers* which he returned to the many difficulties which were proposed at various times, prove him to have been deeply read in the jurisprudence of the empire; and his political sagacity is manifested in his Treatise on the *Duty of a Prince*. He who peruses his *Letters*, will be convinced, that he possessed whatever was most valuable in philosophy, the mathematics, medicine, and theology. A writer*, who was not well-affected to the patriarch, candidly allows that in him were combined all the requisites of literary eminence—"a natural aptness, energy, and felicity of talents, application, wealth, which furnished the means of procuring books, and more than all, an insatiable thirst of fame, to gratify which his nights were not unfrequently devoted to study."

His principal Works.

Photius composed his *Myriobiblon* or *Library* at the request of his brother Tarasius, whilst he was a layman, and as it seems, during an embassy at the court of Bagdat. In the perusal of this work, the learned are at a loss, which most to admire, the acuteness of his perception, the solidity of his judgment, the constancy of his diligence, or the variety of his reading. Tarasius had begged an account of the books which he had read. Photius enumerates and reviews those

* Nicetas in Vita Ign. Conc. t. v.

APP. I.

to the number of two hundred and eighty, theologians, commentators, philosophers, historians, orators, physicians, and grammarians—without any regular method, as his memory, or the association of the moment, seems to have presented to his mind. Of the authors themselves he gives some account; states the argument, the design, and the general contents of each work; appreciates the style and character, and exhibits, in extracts more or less full, such passages as merited peculiar notice. The judgment which he pronounces, is always free, candid, and evincing great knowledge of the subject, though, it has sometimes been thought, too severe. There is certainly a want of order; and as he advances, the plan of his work becomes so far varied, as in some scholars to have excited a suspicion, that the whole is not from the pen of Photius. In the beginning of his review, he generally sets down, in a few words, the argument of the work, and states his opinion; but a fuller account is soon given, and as he draws towards the end, his extracts become much more copious. But, as the work proceeds, his exactness is visibly diminished; or rather, as his hand labours, his mind seeks repose, still transcribing with faithfulness, but producing little which can be called his own.

From the omission of the works of many authors, which he had certainly read, the opinion seems probable, that the *Library* is only a part of a larger compilation, which Photius had, at some other time, executed, or, at least, projected. In its present state, however, it is a rich treasure, including what is most curious in many sciences; rescuing from oblivion the memory of authors, whose writings have wholly or in part perished; and of these preserving fragments which can no-

where else be found. Let me also remark, that it is the model, on which the critical journals have been formed, which, in modern times, and in all languages, have contributed so much to the advancement of literature and to the diffusion of taste.

In turning over the list of writers who had engaged the attention of Photius*, we see, with regret, how many of the two hundred and eighty—and those, in many respects, the most valuable—have been utterly lost, or exist only in the extracts of their works, which he fortunately made. For that loss it is not easy to account; as the Greeks still continued to be a studious and learned people; unless we may be allowed to think that, as the *Library* of Photius, like many modern compilations, afforded to the indolent an easy means of acquiring knowledge, they neglected the task of more laborious reading. From the character of some works, which have come down to us more entire—though every thing seems to have been read by Photius—it may, I think, be truly said, that the copyists, among the Greeks, were not, at all times, more profitably employed than among the Latins.

Besides the *Library*, Photius left other works, which the learned peruse with pleasure, particularly his *Nomocanon*, or a collection of the ecclesiastical and imperial laws, digested and methodised with admirable precision; and his *Epistles*, in number two hundred and fifty, written on different occa-

* See the Bib. G. l. v. c. 38, t. IX.

APP. I.

sions and to various persons. These, in proportion as the subject allowed, evince the delicacy of his taste, the sprightliness of his wit, the depth of his learning, the versatility of his talents, and the strength of his understanding. As he was raised from a layman to the patriarchal chair, it might have been suspected, that he was deficient in that knowledge which was befitting the station; but it is plain, there was no such deficiency; which proves, either that he had the station always in view, or that the taste of the age, had induced him to combine theological learning with his other attainments. He is thought to have had no relish for poetry, from his silence upon that subject, but from the character drawn of him by a contemporary writer*, it seems, that that pleasing art, with every branch of polite literature, had equally engaged his attention†.

The time in which Photius lived, out of compliment to his talents, or perhaps from the fierce controversy which he occasioned, has been denominated the *Photian age*; and we may presume that his example, and the instructions which he freely communicated, though few names are recorded, must have excited in many the ardour of literary emulation. The closing years of the ninth century then were an auspicious æra; and better days seemed hastening to return.

---

* Nicetas in Vit. Ignat.

† On the writings of Photius and his character, see Cave, Hist. Liter. Dupin, Bib. Eccles. Brucker, Hist. Phil. t. III. and particularly the Bib. G. t. IX.

Basil reigned with justice: his understanding was vigorous, his views moderate, and the civil administration of the finances and of the laws admirable. Men forgot the atrocious act which had raised him to the throne. When the treasury was replenished, the money which could be spared from more important exigencies, was expended on the embellishment of the capital and provinces, and in repairing, ornamenting, or erecting churches. As the laws had been neglected; a revision of the jurisprudence of Justinian, in all its parts, became necessary, and a plan was digested, which his son and grandson improved and completed, under the title of *Basilics*. Basil was not learned, but he knew the value of learning; and when he was reconciled to Photius, he entrusted him with the education of his sons.

Of these sons, Leo, who has been dignified with the title of *Philosopher* or the *Wise*, inherited the throne. From what incidents of his reign, or from what proficiency in wisdom, he merited the appellation, could not easily be ascertained, did we not know, upon what slight grounds, or for what unsatisfactory reasons, such distinctions are often conferred upon princes. Historians, indeed, are sufficiently lavish in his praise: they represent him as an admirer of every kind of science, "and of that secret learning, which, from incantation, divines future events." They say also, that he was versed in the knowledge of the motion of the stars, and of their influence*. Such was his philosophy. Oracular pre-

* Annal. Scrip. Zonaras, Cedrenus, etc.

APP. I.

dictions, moreover, were ascribed to him, which, in the style of prophecy, revealed the fates of the Byzantine empire. The works edited, and unedited, which were written by him or in his name, form a miscellaneous mass of orations, sermons, epigrams, moral precepts, riddles or mystical sayings, constitutions, and tactics; among which his *Naumachica* make a principal figure*. An emperor, who was thus prodigal of his pen, and whose sermons were adapted to many festivals of the year, might readily be honoured with the name of *wise*. But it is admitted, that Leo was a zealous protector of learning; and it is enough if princes be taught to aspire to this species of praise. He saw eleven years of the ensuing century.

Tenth Century: Constantine Porphyrogenitus.

Constantine Porphyrogenitus, the son of Leo, ascended the throne after many years of minority and dependence. Of a studious temper and a retired turn of mind, he had dedicated much of his time to the pursuits of science and the liberal arts. His character is thus favourably delineated†: "In the service of God he was pious; and his attachment to letters is attested by his various writings, not polished, indeed, agreeably to the rules of oratorical composition, but still abounding in many beauties. The elegy, which he wrote on the death of his mother, proves, that he had not neglected the art of versification. Philosophy also, which had been little followed, engaged his attention; and by the appointment of proper teachers, he gave a new life to the general cause of

* See Cave Hist. Lit. Baronius, sub an. 911. Brucker, t. III. Bib. G. t. VI.

† Conar. Annal. t. III.

science." But history was his most favourite pursuit; whilst he could amuse the solitary hours of adversity with painting, and in giving encouragement to the mechanical arts. His desire to reanimate the intellectual vigour of the Greeks, which had become torpid by disuse, merits the highest praise; and the measures which he employed were well adapted to the end which he proposed. He drew many learned men to his court; caused diligent search to be made for the writings of such ancient authors, as, notwithstanding the recent labours of Photius, were in danger of being lost. He himself became an author, and with filial reverence wrote the *Life* of his grandfather Basil, in which he delineated what seemed to him a perfect image of royalty. Where protection and rewards would not suffice, he hoped by his own example to secure to letters a more general contribution of talents. For the benefit and satisfaction of the curious, he employed persons to make extracts from such works as were most rare, which extracts were exposed to public inspection.

The sources, from which this compilation was formed, were chiefly historical, and the extracts regarded government and morality, distributed under fifty-three heads. Of these only two are now extant. In the preface it is observed*, that Constantine, whose mind was open to whatever was beautiful, and who executed with facility whatever he conceived, sensible of the advantage of his plan to the public,

* See Bib. G. l. v. c. 5. t. vi.

APP. I.

directed the most eminent works to be collected; but, at the same time, aware, how operose their perusal would be to many, he ordered a selection of passages to be made. He thought, that more attention would thus be gained, and the mind be more strongly impressed. It is added, that whatever in the whole range of history can be deemed most important, has found a place in the work; nor is the order of things disturbed, as their just distribution, under proper heads, presents them in a more united view. But it has been lamented, as I observed of the Library of Photius, that, as by this measure a superficial knowledge could be procured without labour, indolence was encouraged, and the real sources themselves so much neglected, that many valuable works, ceasing to be read, were utterly lost.

In the first embassy to Constantinople, which was undertaken by Liutprand, afterwards bishop of Cremona, in the year 946, on which he was sent by the Italian king Berengarius, some account is given by himself*, of what he saw in the imperial city, and of his interviews with Constantine. But nothing can be less interesting; and to judge from the puerile objects which were exhibited, I am induced to believe, that this embassadour appeared to the Greeks as no better than a barbarian, who was to be entertained by his senses rather than his mind. He is utterly silent on literature; nor was it mentioned to him by the Emperor, whose favourite object it was. Liutprand, indeed, knew little of the

* Liutprand. Hist. l. vi. Inter. Rer. Ital. Scrip. t. ii.

language; but he highly valued his own talents, and he hesitates not to relate, what was said of him by Berengarius, when he appointed him to the office: "He who almost in his cradle made so easy a conquest of the Latin tongue, will soon master that of Greece." We will return to Liutprand on his second embassy. APP. I.

Neither the studies of Constantine, to indulge which he has been accused of neglecting the important cares of the empire, nor his solicitude for the literary improvement of his subjects, were crowned with much success. To instruct his son Romanus in the practice of government, he wrote a *Treatise* on its theory; which was followed by the *Themata*, a work of high importance, which is still extant. In this the provinces of the empire are described, as it was then distributed; whilst it gives an account of the various people, their origin, and antiquities. In the former work, he had spoken of other nations, of their manners, institutions, and military strength; and how they might be able as allies to assist, or as enemies to annoy, the state. Nor were his views for the prosperity of this state as yet completed. He, therefore, directed two other works to be compiled, one on the *Veterinary* art, comprising what had hitherto been published most excellent on the subject; the other on *Agriculture*, formed on a similar plan*. Such were the laudable labours of Constantine; but the age itself did little. No names of philosophical

* Bib. G. ut ante.

APP. I.

writers are recorded: though attention was excited by some rhetoricians and grammarians; a few poets were above contempt: and historians may be found on the Byzantine list not totally void of merit: for, he who preserves facts from oblivion, must ever be entitled to praise.

Simeon Metaphrastes.

Some may doubt whether Simeon, distinguished by the name of Metaphrastes, be entitled to this praise: but his work at least shews the subjects by which the attention of the most learned was then engaged. Simeon was born of noble parents, endowed with superior talents, imbued with the precepts of elegant literature, and advanced, first by Leo and then by Constantine, to the highest offices in the state. Instigated by the admonitions of an anchorite, whom he accidentally met, he undertook to write the *Life* of a Grecian Saint, Theoctista; and afterwards, in the intervals of business, having by the command of his master Constantine extended his plan of hagiography, he pursued it into the remoter periods of church history. He carefully collected the lives which had been compiled, some of which he revised, whilst he retained and published, in their original state, those which for their elegance deserved to be read. Where elegance was wanting, he had recourse to his own pen, digesting, amending, polishing, as it seemed best; and it is said, sometimes when the materials were scanty, supplying the deficiency from the stores of his own imagination. A volume of one hundred and twenty-two *Lives* was thus formed: a work, in point of style, not disgraceful to a scholar; but which has more the appearance of a panegyric, than of a history. But he cannot be deemed responsible for the many

spurious and faithless legends which other writers, availing themselves of the fame of Metaphrastes, afterwards added to his compilation. Some other religious Tracts of Metaphrastes are extant, as likewise *Annals* of History *. APP. I.

It must be owned, that the *Lexicon* of Suidas—who is thought by some to have lived in this century—is much more valuable to scholars. It is a work, partly historical, partly explanatory, or, as it has been sometimes styled, a treasure of various knowledge: in which, besides the explanation of many curious terms, an account is given, as in the *Library* of Photius, of historians, poets, orators, and other writers, with copious extracts from their works. And as many of these writings are no longer extant, I need not repeat, that this circumstance greatly enhances the merit of the *Lexicon*. But the critics complain, and not without reason, of negligence, and omissions, and a visible want of patient research, if not of judicious discrimination, in the choice and arrangement of the complicated materials †. But it cannot excite surprise that when taste had vanished, the qualities, which attend it, should also have disappeared. Indeed, the very character of compilations, such as the *Lexicon* of Suidas, the *Library* of Photius, and many similar works in our days—though we must be thankful, in regard to the former, for what they have saved from the general wreck—appear to my mind to evince Suidas.

* See Cave, Hist. Lit. Dupin Bib. Eccles. Bib. G. t. VI.

† Bib. G. l. v. c. 40. t. IX.

APP. I. the decay of literature. While letters really flourish, men draw more from the stores of their own intellects, and original works are produced. When intellect is enfeebled, and genius no longer exists, they have recourse to compilations, and live, as it were, upon the labours of their predecessors.

The work entitled Etymologicon Magnum has been ascribed to the same Suidas, but without sufficient authority, though it may have been composed in the same period with the *Lexicon*. The Etymologicon Magnum is a work of great utility to the Greek student, and a rich repository of observations, on the grammar and etymology of the language. Much fanciful conjecture may be discovered under the last head*: but the work itself, proves, how attentive the Greeks were, even at this period, to preserve the purity of their admired tongue.

As associated with the subjects of the *Library* of Photius and the *Lexicon* of Suidas, I may here introduce Stobæus, who was doubtless an author of a more early age, as he is mentioned by Photius; but of whom I have hitherto omitted to speak. Indeed, it is not known who he was, or when he flourished. The value, however, of his work, has given celebrity to the name of Stobæus. It is an *Anthology* in four books, containing extracts, on the various points of moral and natural philosophy, from nearly five hundred poets and

* See Bib. G. l. v. c. 40. t. x.

prose writers*. Hence, though the work is imperfect, what remains is of considerable value. While it preserves the fragments, it shews what were the doctrines of various sages, when entire works are lost, on many interesting topics. It shews, moreover, how learned and how laborious the Greeks, at all times, were; compelling us to admire their intellectual fecundity, and, in contemplating the comparatively few surviving relics, to lament the indolence of copyists, the devastations of barbarism, and the ravages of time. I shall soon have another occasion of speaking of Athenæus.

Constantine Porphyrogenitus died in 959; and we in vain look among his successors, the lawful inheritors or the usurpers of the throne, for a prince, who was himself studious of the praise of learning, or disposed to encourage the pursuit. Of Basil II. one of the grandsons of Constantine, whose reign was extended beyond the century, it is related †, "That he held men of science in no estimation, viewing learning itself as useless and unprofitable lumber. In his choice of ministers and secretaries, he had no regard to birth or talents; and his despatches were dictated in the first words which offered, without any attention to style." A vicious education, which could not subdue his spirit, had clouded his mind; and the recollection of his learned but feeble grandsire—often repeated by the tongues of flatterers—might have encouraged a real or affected contempt of learning and the arts.

* See Bib. l. v. c. 30. t. VIII.

† Zonar. Annal. l. III.

APP. I.

The Embassy of Liutprand.

In the reign of Nicephorus Phocas, between the years 963 and 969, Liutprand was, a second time, despatched to the Byzantine court by the western emperor Otho. As the first journey was void of interesting information, I had hoped that the second would be more successful; when we might presume, that the embassador, better skilled in the language, would be curious to contemplate the state of Grecian literature, to compare it with that of the West, and to enrich his journal with valuable observations. But not a word appears upon this subject, though he has himself furnished a detailed account of occurrences*. His reception and treatment at Constantinople, were highly contumelious; and in the various interviews with Nicephorus, his courtiers, and others, it is not easy to determine, which merit reprehension most, the insulting reflections and buffoonery of the Greeks, or the petulant replies of the embassador. The portrait, which he draws of the emperor, is that of the most filthy monster; nor is his description of the Grecian manners, their dress, their feasts, their processions, their amusements, in any respect, more inviting. His pencil is ever laden with dirt; and the hand which holds it, is, evidently, hurried on by the stimulus of irritation and resentment. During a residence of more than a hundred days among the most learned and polite people, the barbarian bishop of Cremona could discover nothing, which did not provoke his censure or his contempt. And when, at length, he obtained permission to return, he

* Legatio Liutpr. ad Nic. Phocam, inter. Rer. Ital. Script. t. II.

takes his leave of the Imperial city, with the following selection of epithets. "That city," says he, "once so wealthy, once so flourishing; but now famished, perjured, lying, deceitful, rapacious, greedy, niggardly, vain-glorious." Then, in his own elegant Latin, he adds, "After a journey of fifty days, *asinando, ambulando, equitando, jejunando, sitiendo, suspirando, flendo, gemendo,* I reached Naupactus." APP. I.

If the reader be at all acquainted with the tissue of Byzantine history, and particularly with the characters of the princes who filled the throne, he will be sensible, that literature had little to expect; and if, in some more auspicious moments, a few men of extraordinary learning shall appear, he will view them as he does some rare phenomena, or some extraordinary occurrences. The power of the empire was daily diminished by the attacks of foreign enemies, whilst it was consumed by internal discord, seditious conspiracies, and violent revolutions, which shook the Imperial throne, and were attended by the sudden fall and elevation of succeeding competitors for the sovereignty. From the death of Constantine X. in 1028, who, with his brother Basil, had enjoyed the title of Augustus more than threescore years, a disgraceful period of twenty-eight years ensued, during which, the Greeks, degraded below the common level of servitude, were transferred, like a herd of cattle, by the choice or caprice of two contemptible females, the daughters of that Constantine. Such events, attended, as usual, by intestine commotions, while they deprived the political body of strength and consistence, broke in upon the public order, rendered all things precarious, and, dejecting the spirits of the nation, Eleventh Century: State of the Empire.

APP. I. damped the fire of genius, and discouragad the efforts of literary ambition*.

The Macedonian or Basilian dynasty expired with Theodora; and the Comnenian succeeded in the person of Isaac Comnenus in 1057. But after a little more than two years, he retired to a monastery, with the reputation, "not, indeed, of learning, but of being studious of letters, and fond of learned society†." The four immediate successors of Isaac were not of the Comnenian family; amongst whom Constantine Ducas is represented as a prince destitute of talents, but devoted to virtuous pursuits; who, when glowing with admiration of the successful efforts of some learned men, was heard to say, "that, in his estimation, the crown of science was preferable to the crown of empire‡." This distinction, his son Michael VII. a contemptible and weak prince, flattered himself that he might be worthy to obtain, by frequenting the school of the great philosopher Psellus. "Here," says the historian¶, "occupied in puerile exercises, he proceeded on to the study of letters; sometimes engaged in the rules of grammar, in the construction of verses, and the comparison of idioms; at other times, exercised in rhetorical declamation, and in the art of writing history; and sometimes solemnly prepared to attend the moral lectures of philosophy. But he was utterly incapable of any acquirement;

---

* Mosheim, Eccles. Hist. vol. II. cent. XI.

† Zonaras, Annal. t. III. ‡ Ibid. ¶ Ibid.

and, while the imperial scholar thus wasted his time, the state was neglected, the people oppressed, and the provinces invaded." When a rival advanced, the feeble emperor, without much reluctance, resigned the ensigns of royalty, and became a monk.

Letters could not be expected to flourish under such weak and degrading patronage; or amidst the tumultuous changes and incessant troubles, which surrounded the throne and disturbed the government. The condition of the western empire, in the periods of its most rapid decline, was, at no time, more awfully calamitous, than now was, and had been, that of the falling Byzantium. Some of the princes, indeed, could exhibit many years of their reigns, which were marked by an equal series of disasters; whilst the sceptre was torn from the hands of others, by murder, by privation of sight, or, when mercy had more influence, by consignment to the seclusion of a convent*.

In the convents of the East, which were even more numerous than those of the West, and where fallen ambition might find repose—would be found, among the indolent and the sincerely pious, many men of various literary tastes, who had been disgusted by the outrage and violence of the times, or had been allured by the prospect of literary leisure and the opportunities of books and masters. Platonism had taken refuge in these asylums; and here the wildest

* On these times, see the Annal. Scrip. Cedrenus, Zonaras, &c.

APP. I.

theories, which are so accordant with the Asiatic taste, found their appropriate nutriment. Such pursuits might or might not be innocuous: but from the multitudes of men of all habits and characters with which the cloisters were thronged, it is related, that not only theological controversies were here assiduously fostered, but many civil feuds were encouraged which helped to distract the empire. Still learning had many votaries; whose ranks continued to furnish the able ministers, who graced the episcopal sees of the Eastern church. Xiphilinus, says the historian*, "at this time raised to the Byzantine chair, was versed in all the branches of learning; and he had filled an important seat in the senate. This he voluntarily relinquished, and, shaving his head, embraced a life of solitude among the monasteries of Mount Olympus; when, after many years, he was deemed worthy of the patriarchal dignity." Before him, the same post of pre-eminence had been in the hands of Michael Cerulerius, a prelate of great erudition; but who bore too close a resemblance to his predecessor Photius, and who, like him, from the love of strife or the restlessness of unworthy ambition, without provocation, renewed the contest with the Western church, on points of comparatively little moment.

Michael Psellus.

I mentioned the philosopher Psellus, the master of Michael VII., who is acknowledged to have been the literary ornament of the age, and generally styled the "Prince of Philosophers." He was a native of Constantinople, descended

---

* Zonar. Ann. t. III.—Xiphilinus, the epitomiser of the imperfect history of Dion Cassius, was the nephew of the patriarch.

from an ancient Patrician family, employed in high stations by many successive princes, who often consulted him on the intrigues of the court and the arduous concerns of state. After the death of his pupil, however, or rather after his abdication, he experienced the common fate of courtiers, was stripped of all his honours, and condemned to a cell.

A profound critic* observes, that he who reads the works of Michael Psellus, which are replete with science, enriched by a copious diction, by acuteness of invention, and by depth of learning—will not hesitate to pronounce: that, as he surpassed his contemporaries, in the multiplicity of his works, he rose above them in every attainment. He adds, that Nature in order to exhibit what her real powers were, seems to have formed him in the declining state of Grecian literature. We have a description† of its low condition and succeeding progress when he first entered the schools and rose into eminence. "From the time of the first Basil, the best studies had been neglected; but not wholly extinguished. They afterwards revived, excited by the zeal of many able men, who then came forward. These men—despising the idle discipline, which had occupied their predecessors, in vain and frivolous pursuits, by which the cause of real learning and elegant letters had been brought into contempt—resolutely seized the proper method of receiving and imparting instruction. When John, called the Italian, arrived at Byzantium, the

* Brucker Hist. Philos. t. III.

† Anna Comnena. Alexiad. lib. v.

APP. I.

former torpor being shaken off, many, with wonderful ardour, engaged in the literary career. Public disputations became fashionable; and as he learned the art of logic, John was daily seen vigorously engaged with these sophists; who were fond of contention, and in argument never came to the last word. He then joined the school of Psellus, that celebrated scholar, who had reached the highest point of erudition and wisdom—not so much by the aid of masters, whose doors he had seldom entered, as by his own admirable quickness and capacity. Perfectly skilled in all that Greece had taught, he added to it the acquirements of the oriental schools; and thus obtained the reputation of the most learned man, of whom we then could boast." This scholar who appears to have been in a great measure self-taught, kindled a general ardour in the public mind. A new title, that of "Prince of Philosophers," was conferred upon him; the youth of Constantinople crowded to his lectures; and the door of civil honours was opened to his merits. We have seen, that he numbered among his pupils, the Emperor Michael VII. and the example of the Prince, as we may readily suppose, was followed by many courtiers. Here, however, Psellus did not escape reproach. He adopted, it seems, the maxim of Plato, that governments could not be well administered without philosophy, and concluding, in the pride of superior wisdom, that whatever fell from his own lips was entitled to the name of philosophy, when he discovered, that Michael was utterly void of talents, he amused him with the puerilities which I mentioned, and permitted the state to be neglected. "Our Emperor," the common complaint was, "deceived and idly occupied by the Prince of Philosophers, is bringing ruin on all his subjects."

The reputation of Psellus began to decline; and John the Italian, who was now his rival, was at hand to avail himself of the incident.

The following passage is curious*: "The Italian now gained admiration, and his efforts were crowned with the applause, not of the multitude only, but of the nobles, and of the Emperor Michael and his brothers. To Psellus, indeed, they did not refuse the palm of science and the highest place of estimation; but they were delighted with the Italian; and to him they had recourse in their logical disputations. The imperial family, in all its branches, were devoted to letters; and their countenance gave confidence to the rival of Psellus. He met him in dispute: and when, with ease and with the velocity of an eagle, the superior man broke asunder the wily nets, and escaped from the captious artifices of the sophist, he regarded him with a furious eye. The agitation of his limbs, and his noisy clamours attested his jealous feelings and the anguish of disappointment." I have said, what, after this, was the fate of Psellus; and John the Italian succeeded to his honours, as a teacher, and to the title of "Prince of Philosophers," though he was far inferior in science and in literary accomplishments †.

Among the works of Psellus, which are numerous both in prose and verse, and on a variety of subjects‡, I observe one

* Alexiad. l. v. † Hist. Phil. t. iii.

‡ See Diatriba Leo. Allat. in Bib. G. t. v. p. 14.

APP. I. "on the art of making gold" (περὶ χρυσοποιίας), addressed to the patriarch Michael Cerulerius. On his general style of writing, an able critic * pronounces: That no Greek, either in that or the following age, was more acute in invention, more judicious in arrangement, wrote with more eloquence, or on every subject displayed more profound research. Nor was there any science, he adds, which he did not illustrate by notes, or attempt happily to abridge, or to set off by some improved method.

The age added two more historians to the Byzantine list, Cedrenus and John Scylitzes. The first compiled an *Abridgment of Histories* from the beginning of the world to the time of Isaac Comnenus, 1057, a work wholly extracted from other authors; whence the fable of the jackdaw has been applied to him. The second wrote the *History of Events in the East*, from the year 811 to the reign of Alexius Comnenus, in 1081.† Of these, and of the other Byzantine historians, I may add to what I before observed, that, compared with contemporary Latin writers, their style is more pure, and the arrangement more correct; but that we every-where discern almost equal credulity and want of critical discernment. We may then safely pronounce what was the character of the age. No writer, whatever be his own propensities, will hazard the recital of idle fables and groundless facts, unless conscious that

* Leo Allatius, in Bib. G. t. v. p. 14. † Bib. G. l. v. c. 5. t. VII.

his readers are sufficiently ignorant or superstitious to admit them with unhesitating promptitude. APP. I.

In 1081, Alexius Comnenus, the second of the four surviving nephews of Isaac, the founder of the dynasty, was invested with the purple. This prince was endowed by nature with her choicest gifts; educated in the school of obedience and adversity, and improved by all the advantages of a liberal education. His life has been transmitted to us by the pen of a favourite daughter, and must therefore be read with caution. As it is conveyed through other channels,* in which there is less panegyric, and perhaps more truth, it is certainly entitled to less unqualified praise: but, compared with other times, his reign of thirty-seven years, though sometimes disfigured by calamities and clouded by defeats, was a reign of glory. Alexius Comnenus.

The general ardour which we perceived in quest of science, particularly about the court and in the higher circles of society, was likely to be augmented rather than lessened, when a prince was on the throne, who was better able to appreciate merit, though less disposed to encourage sophistry. We are told that Alexius cultivated learning; but not with that solicitude which many seemed to expect. But he promoted, however, men of science; and when the chair of Byzantium became vacant, filled it with a prelate, who had been "practised from his youth in the discipline of sacred and profane

* See Zonaras Annal. t. III.

APP. I. letters." He constructed and endowed receptacles for orphans, for the infirm, and for the aged, and what shewed how little his predecessors, notwithstanding their ostentatious attachment to what was called philosophy, had consulted the real interests of their subjects, he opened schools of grammar, wherein masters were appointed, and the children of the poor were instructed and nourished. On some occasions he seems to have emulated the fame, which was so richly possessed by the great Justinian, of a theological controversialist; for the historian * relates, that he once passed many months in the neighbourhood of Philippopolis, disputing with the Manicheans, or, as they were called, the Paulitian heretics, many of whom he brought over to the orthodox faith.

The two persons who singularly graced the court of Alexius, and reflected honour on the age, were Anna Comnena, his eldest and favourite daughter, and her husband Nicephorus Bryennius. The power of the latter was great. The chief administration of the laws, and the domestic concerns of the palace were entrusted to his care. He likewise excelled in the various branches of literature; "while his wife, richly endowed by nature, and possessing a tongue attuned to the tones of Attic elegance, pursued the same path with increasing avidity, and dared to fathom the depths of abstruse contemplation. Her time was passed with her books, or in the society of the learned." † In a city not void of taste, such exalted characters would naturally excite admiration; and as

* Zonaras Annal. t. III. † Ibid.

the partiality of Alexius was always visible, and the empress Irene did not disguise her views, a suspicion generally prevailed, that he might be induced, by fondness or intreaty, to supersede the lawful heir, and invest the learned pair with the purple. Had the purple been really offered, we have too much reason to believe that the philosophy of Comnena would not have rejected the alluring bait.

The first Crusade.

It was in this reign, and towards the close of the century, that the western world engaged in the first crusade: an undertaking, which, as I remarked, was engendered some years before in the rapacious mind of Gregory VII.; rendered popular by the preaching of Peter the Hermit; and finally matured in the council of Clermont by Urban II. The East beheld, with astonishment, the vast inundation of human beings which overflowed its provinces; which the inhabitants of Byzantium were told to believe, had been presaged by a portentous flight of locusts in the preceding year*. Measures, which were marked by temerity, or not tempered by prudence, might have endangered the throne; and we have reason to admire the superior policy of Alexius in his intercourse with an ebbing and flowing multitude, irascible, insolent, and powerful, by whom his city was encompassed for many months. In that policy, however, the Latin writers could see nothing but a tissue of perfidious conduct and hostile designs.

* Zonaras Annal. t. III.

APP. K. While these numerous myriads from various nations and of all ranks in society, were detained on the western shores of the Bosphorus; it may be asked whether none of them would be disposed, from curiosity or other motives, to inquire into the state of letters and the liberal arts, among a people, of whose talents and acquirements they had often heard, and whose superiority, many objects, which were forced upon their observation, would, in spite of prejudices, compel them to own? But though the magnificence of the Byzantine court, or the splendour of palaces, might sometimes engage their attention, yet intent on plunder or pleasure, or the accomplishment of their grand designs, they would be little disposed to look into schools and libraries, or to balance the merits of historians, philosophers, and poets. Besides, they had no knowledge of the language; and if, at home, the treasures of Latin literature were entirely neglected, while easier means of enjoying them could be procured, there was little probability, that Greece would at once inspire them with taste, and a more laudable curiosity. The reader will recollect what was said of the learned Liutprand, bishop of Cremona.

It could not be unwelcome to Alexius to hear that whole armies—if the name of army could be applied to such a motley assemblage of men and women, monks, priests, and children—had perished; and, though the real soldiers, headed by their renowned commanders, advanced and conquered, few, if any, would return, again to harass his patience by their insolence, or to endanger the state by their ambition. He listened with indifference to the reports of their disasters

or their victories; and when Jerusalem was taken in 1099, he had yet eighteen years to reign.

Twelfth Century: John Comnenus.

The impious attempt of the empress Irene to place the imperial diadem on the heads of Nicephorus Bryennius and her daughter Anna, ceased only with the expiring breath of Alexius. "Nicephorus," she urged, "is possessed of superior eloquence, and peculiarly adapted to business: he is skilled moreover in the liberal arts, and these, while they form the mind to virtue, become powerfully useful, whether the state is to be governed in peace, or protected in time of war." Little doubt could remain respecting the persons who suggested this address: and when Alexius, who was immoveable in the cause of justice, was dead, and the rightful heir, his son John Comnenus, was seated on the throne, twelve months did not elapse, before a conspiracy was formed to transfer the government to his sister Anna Comnena. It failed through the fears, the indolence, or perhaps the just scruples of her husband, who, according to the historian,* was asleep when he should have been at the head of the conspirators: Anna fiercely upbraided him, exclaiming, "that nature had mistaken the sexes, and given to Bryennius the soul of a woman." John had the magnanimity to pardon this flagrant act of treason; and Nicephorus continued to enjoy his confidence.

* Nicetas Choniates Annal. in Joan. Comnen.

APP. I.

The ambition of the philosophic princess, which was thus disgraced by treason, reflected no honour on the "liberal arts," which she professed to love; and which, as she instructed her mother to say, had power "to form the mind to virtue." That their influence would have been more propitious in the concerns of government had she been permitted to reign, we are not authorized to infer: but we know from history, that through a period of five and twenty years the administration of John Comnenus, was distinguished by many virtues and great military renown; and we may, therefore, conclude, that his maxims were drawn from a less deceitful source, than the schools of sophistical disputation. That he had speculated, however, and not idly, may be collected from a certain measure of government, which, only a philosopher would have projected, in so large and so vicious a community. He abolished the penalty of death; and, "during his reign, not a single person suffered death, or was corporally punished." He likewise moderated the expensive magnificence of the court; and, whilst himself set the example, he attempted a laudable reformation in the public and private manners of the people. To what extent he had cultivated, or how much he patronised letters, we are not told; but, from the pursuits of the Byzantine court during his minority, and the noble tendencies of his own mind, when he assumed the government, we may be confident, that he at no time neglected the best interests of science.

We may, perhaps, be allowed to lament, that the love of military glory, was one of his predominant characteristics. His life was spent in camps or in warlike preparations. "He

remained at home," says the historian, "merely to be seen by his subjects, and to recreate his spirits by theatrical exhibitions; while the soldiers visited their families, refreshed their horses, and sharpened their arms for action." When wounded by a poisoned arrow, in a remote valley of Cilicia, he delivered his last instructions in the agonies of death. Amongst many excellent reflections, which he uttered on this occasion, he observed: "The east and the west have seen me in arms: their nations have felt the weight of our attacks: my life has been passed not in palaces, but in tents, for it was ever my wish to breathe the free air of the heavens: twice already have I seen this land *, which is now covered by our camp."

But though John Comnenus was a warrior, his government was so strong and so respected, that, after the first year, it was never disturbed by any conspiracy or rebellion. Thus a more fortunate period could not have been selected, for the prosecution of letters and the arts of peace. If it was permitted to pass unprofitably, let the evil be ascribed to the inveteracy of causes which had been long felt; but on this, and on many other occasions, we have to regret the dearth of information. Military occurrences, whether successful or unsuccessful, domestic quarrels, portentous or trifling incidents, are detailed to satiety: but the progress or decline of man, his intellectual exertions, the state of society, the additions

* Nicet. Annal. in Joan. Comnen.

APP. I. made to the stores of science; the names of authors, and the characters of their works, if at all recorded, occupy only a few passing lines; and the judgment, which we are disposed to form, must frequently rest solely on the comparative value of the writer in our hands, the sterility of whose communications we are compelled to blame.

The controversy with the Latin church, on certain points connected with ancient rites and discipline—which had been formed by Michael Cerularius—if it fomented animosity, was not without its use. It excited a spirit of inquiry, and gave employment to talents. At the same time the ecclesiastical superiors, particularly the patriarchs of Constantinople, were strenuous in promoting learning, and encouraging merit, lest indifference or sloth should deprive their church of champions to defend her cause. In this point of view, it may with truth be said, that all the errors which, at different periods, disturbed or divided the faith of christians, exerted in some measure a salutary influence, by the excitement which they afforded to intellectual activity.

John Zonaras. The early part of this century could boast of some historical writers. John Zonaras, whom I have often quoted, had been employed in the offices of the court; but having lost his wife and children, retired to a convent. Here, as he enjoyed leisure, and was known to possess abilities, he was often urged by the monks to undertake some historical composition. They dwelt on what they conceived to be the blemishes of historians, particularly those of less modern date; stating what should be avoided, and what most carefully pursued.

Passing from the matter to the style, they observed*: "In these compositions, passages sometimes occur, which are so inelegantly, so rudely expressed, and even disfigured by such plebeian and barbarous phrases, that men of letters turn with disgust from the perusal."

The monks had some taste, and critical discrimination. Zonaras listened to their advice; and, at the same time, in order to fill his many vacant hours, he compiled his *Annals of History*, from the earliest times to the death of Alexius Comnenus in 1018. The brevity which is inseparable from such a *Compendium*, has occasioned many omissions in his narrative; but we are under many obligations to him for much information in the latter portion of his *Annals*, which cannot be elsewhere found. Sensible, it should seem, that his work and style of writing required some apology, he says: "If all its parts be not properly finished, the reader must be indulgent. Perhaps, in this my retirement, I was not provided with all necessary works; perhaps, the authors of these works disagreed in their accounts of the same events, which accounts, therefore, to avoid prolixity, I passed over. And let no one wonder, or blame the narration, or me its parent, should the diction be found various, and not always like itself. Obliged to borrow from others, I took their style and language; when I added from myself, it was my wish, in order to pre-

* Annal. t. 1.

APP. I.

serve some uniformity, to imitate the writer whom I copied *." He is the author of other works †.

Nicephorus Bryennius.

Nicephorus Bryennius, also, whose character and literary accomplishments have been already mentioned, when he had leisure from the important avocations of office, was anxious to pursue this favourite path to fame. About the year 1137, he accompanied his master into Syria, and returning in an infirm state of health, shortly died, leaving behind him a *History of the Affairs of Byzantium*, from the beginning of the Comnenian dynasty in 1057 to the reign of Alexius in 1081. It is probable that he intended to have subjoined the transactions of this reign, in which himself bore no inconsiderable part; particularly as the work was undertaken at the request of the Empress Irene. To whom could she so safely entrust her fame and the deeds of a varied and active life, as to him, whose deserts she manifested so much solicitude to reward with a crown? He was, besides, particularly attached to Alexius, his father-in-law, his patron, his protector, his friend. We may, therefore, regret, that the work was not accomplished; for, from the sample which he has left of his talents, we have authority to conclude, that his *History of the Reign of Alexius* would have proved the richest gem in the Byzantine collection. In Nicephorus we see a writer, who had managed the concerns of an empire, and headed armies.

* Annal. t. 1.

† See Bib. G. l. v. c. 42. t. x.

His wife, Anna Comnena, undertook and finished what he was not permitted to execute. After the attempt against her brother's life and crown, though his clemency pardoned the crime, his prudence would direct him to guard against her future machinations. She seems, however, to have resided near the court, still partaking of the favours and prosperity of Bryennius; still "attuning her tongue to the tones of Attic elegance;" and still indulging her taste, "sometimes in books, sometimes in the conversation of the learned." But when her husband, whose great character formed her safeguard, was no more, Anna withdrew from the public scene; and solacing her grief in literary retirement, produced the *Alexiad*, or the *History* of the reign of her father, in fifteen books. Much has been written in praise of this performance, which is at once diffuse and elegant; but censure has been sometimes mingled with the commendation it has received. The character of a daughter, though it claimed indulgence, naturally excited suspicion. The means of accurate information were within her reach; and she professes, that her pen was directed by unbiassed truth. When I read the Alexiad some years ago, there appeared to me to be too much labour to win belief; and that an incessant affectation of learning, while it destroyed that simplicity of narration which alone can please, betrayed the vanity of an author, immoderately anxious to make a parade of her talents. The genuine character of Alexius ceases to be discriminated in a confused catalogue of virtues; and the perpetual strain of panegyric and apology induces a pause, during which the inquisitive reader turns to the pages of other writers, who could not be swayed by equal partiality. The inquiry will not prove quite favourable; though an equitable judge would be equally cautious,

APP. I. not to trust to the invidious statements of the crusaders and their writers.

Manuel Comnenus. On the death of John Comnenus, in 1143, his second son Manuel, whom the dying words of his father recommended to the army, ascended the throne. His long reign of thirty-seven years, filled with the vicissitudes of military enterprizes against the Saracens, the Christians, and the barbarous nations beyond the Danube, presented to the Annalist* subjects of considerable interest; but little in which literature had any share.

The Second Crusade. Again, in 1147, Constantinople beheld other armies of crusaders, more formidable for their discipline than the former, surround her walls; the first under the command of the Emperor Conrad III.; the second under Louis VII. of France. And, again, the same charges of malevolence, of deceit, and of perfidy, which were brought against Alexius, are repeated, in heavier criminations, against the grandson. The Greeks admit the charges: "No kind of mischief was there," says the historian†, "which the emperor did not himself plot, or cause to be practised, against them." But, having described the suspicious aspect of the expedition—which was accompanied by women in the indecent attire of men, and whose soldiers, clothed in steel, seemed to thirst for blood—he adds, what was the general policy of the measures: "That, deterred by the sufferings of their fathers, no

* Nicetas Choniat. in Manuel. † Nicet. Annal. in Manuel.

new armies might disturb the provinces of the empire." In truth, a salutary lesson was soon received. The army of Conrad perished in the defiles of Mount Taurus; and Louis, having visited Jerusalem, and seen his army melt away by the various accidents of war, returned into France. APP. I.

Great address was necessary in the management of these ferocious invaders, whose profound casuists, on a solemn occasion, had the audacity to propose the seizure of Constantinople, as the only measure which could ensure success to the expedition. "The holy war in which we are engaged," observed the Bishop of Langres to the French king, "is just; it is accordingly just, that we adopt the means most likely to give it success." The wily Greeks were their superiors in stratagem; and we have another bishop introduced, whose features may well represent the general character of the nation. When the German army, says the historian *, was in the vicinage of Philippopolis, no disorder happened, which was apprehended. The bishop of the province, named Michael---an eloquent man, versed in every branch of polite learning, and very captivating in conversation---gained the ear of Conrad. The prince was proud, and at this time elated; but he was so fascinated by the blandishments of Michael's oratory, who, meaning one thing, said another, and, Proteus like, transformed himself into all the shapes of friendship; so that Conrad became obedient to his suggestions, accepted his invitations, sat down at his table, and took the cup of

* Nicet. Annal. in Manuel.

APP. I.

fellowship from his hand. Soon after this, when a quarrel ensued between the armies, which threatened the effusion of blood, the rage of Conrad was soothed by the voice of the bishop, and tranquillity restored. But we are still left to conjecture in what manner the melting sweetness of Michael's tongue was transfused through the rough throat of a Teutonic interpreter.

Manuel fond of Controversy.

Manuel himself was naturally eloquent, wrote his letters with great purity, composed religious *tracts* in imitation of his predecessors; and sometimes publicly declaimed on religious subjects. He did not even decline points of mysterious import; pretending doubts, and proposing questions, of which he demanded the solution in assemblies of the learned. His bold curiosity, and a pertinacious adherence to his own interpretations in preference to the authority of ancient decisions, were not lightly censured. On some occasions, however, he took the side of orthodoxy, when his opposers, who were men of great eminence, were dismissed from their employments. Of the doctrinal edicts which the imperial theologian issued, one abrogated an anathema, which ancient usage had pronounced against "the God of Mahomet." Manuel had sufficient discrimination to discover blasphemy in the anathema; and he besides added, that it gave offence to those Saracens who might be inclined to embrace the faith of Christ. The patriarch and other prelates were firm. A decree, however, was formed, than which nothing more eloquent had been seen. This was proposed to the acceptance of the bishops. They still continued their opposition; and when they were commanded, in great indignation, to attend at the palace, the learned Eustathius, bishop of Thessalonica,

signalised his zeal. The Emperor, who was now near his end, was too ill to receive them; but his secretary was commissioned to signify his royal pleasure. He did it in the high tones of authority. "I should, indeed, be mad," exclaimed Eustathius, "and little worthy of this habit," taking up his episcopal robe, "were I induced to say, that the gross being, imagined by (Mahomet) that teacher of all obscenity and wickedness, was the God whom we adore." The bold declaration amazed the prelates: they were silent; and the secretary, without saying any thing, returned to his master. It matters little what was the issue of this contest. Manuel expressed great anger; but, after some time, he consented, that his decree should be expressed in less obnoxious words *. His astrologers had promised him years of glory; but feeling the vanity of their predictions, he called for the habit of a monk, and substituting it for the royal robe, expired. It was in the year 1180.

Eustathius, the Commentator of Homer.

I introduced the short account of the last controversy, to shew, what still was the taste of the Byzantine court, during the reign of an emperor who seemed to entertain none but military views; but I introduced it chiefly, that the reader might become acquainted with a man, of whom I must now speak more at length.

Eustathius, the bishop of Thessalonica, was the celebrated

* Nicet Annal. in Manuel.

APP. I.

Commentator on the Iliad and the Odyssey of Homer. The commentary is now extant in three folio volumes; and it has been elegantly denominated κερας αμαλθειας, the horn of plenty. Its author is represented as endowed with virtue, with learning, and with eloquence; practically versed in the details of business; of an aspect so venerable, and an address so powerful, that his presence commanded respect, and his words ensured submission. When Thessalonica was taken by a Sicilian army, and treated with unheard of cruelty, Eustathius interposed the influence of his eloquence in favour of its citizens, and softened the rage of the savage conqueror*. In the introduction to his *Commentaries* he speaks with great modesty of the undertaking, on which, he says, he entered, in order to collect a variety of documents, not for the learned, by whom they were not wanted, but for the use of young men, were it only for the sake of bringing back to their recollection what they had before learned. "This then," he adds, "I have done, and I have arranged in due order what seemed most useful, not borrowing all that other interpreters of the poet have written—which would be an endless and unprofitable labour—but disposing my materials in such a manner, that each reader might find what was most agreeable to his taste." In truth, a maxim, philosophical, moral, or political, will hardly be found, which, drawn, as Eustathius fondly fancied, from the rich mine of his poet, is not admitted into this horn of plenty†.

* Nicet. Annal. in Andronic.

† Bib. G. l. 11. c. 3, t. 1.

While our admiration is raised by a work, which is so minute, so comprehensive, so complete in all its parts, interspersed with observations and passages from critics, philologists, poets, and historians, we cannot but contemplate with delight the enthusiasm by which he was incited to the laborious undertaking, and sustained during its progress. It proves, at the same time, that the poet—whose immortal labours, as intimately connected with the interests of heathenism, had been warmly decried by the christian apologists—had now assumed his proper station. Apprehension could no longer be caused by his fables, his gods and their achievements; and this voluminous commentary furnishes a satisfactory proof of the ardour with which he was read. That, however, it should have been written, in the twelfth century, by a bishop, who, as we have seen, was not void of zeal in the cause of orthodoxy, and who was famed for piety, is highly favourable to the Grecian taste, and exhibits a fact in the history of letters, on which I dwell with peculiar complacency.

From the statement of Eustathius, we learn, that he had before him many comments on the works of his favourite poet; and, from the admiration in which he had at all times been held, it cannot be doubted that much had been written: but little has come down to us which is more ancient than this commentary or what it has preserved*. He was greatly indebted to the Deipnosophist of Athenæus; and as this is

Athenæus.

* Bib. G. l. II. c. 3, t. I.

APP. I.

a work, from which we have derived our principal knowledge of the private life of the Greeks, it is proper that I should say of him what may be deemed necessary. He appears to have lived as early as the beginning of the third century of our era. Choosing for his model the *Symposion* or *Feast* of Plato, Athenæus assembles at the table of a wealthy Roman a number of learned men, who are supposed to expend much erudition on every part of the entertainment. The professed object of the author, was to detail to his contemporaries the convivial antiquities of their ancestors, which he does in the convenient and lively form of a dialogue. Discourses, which are replete with wit and urbanity, pass upon the liquors and dishes, with disquisitions on a variety of miscellaneous topics, heightened by curious and erudite inquiries; whilst the opinions of authors are produced with quotations from their works. This forms the most interesting portion of the dialogue. Indeed, it has been remarked, that so much of the business of human life is mediately or immediately connected with eating and drinking, that no great ingenuity was required to introduce many curious particulars; and much useful information. From the mass of extracts Athenæus appears to have been more especially conversant with the comic poets and theatrical writers*. His work, however, as we possess it, is very imperfect; but fortunately, a copious epitome of the whole had been formed at an early period. This has been transmitted to us entire, and Eustathius himself made use of it in compiling his Commentary.

* See Bib. G. l. IV. c. 20. t. III.

How rich then is the store of Grecian literature; for though almost innumerable originals have perished, yet, Athenæus, Stobæus, Photius, Suidas, and others, have preserved fragments, which convey no imperfect sketch of their authors talents; and which like gems may have acquired value from their rarity.

John Tzetzes.

About the time of Eustathius, two other critics, who were brothers, Isaac and John Tzetzes; but particularly the latter, pursued the same literary career, if not with all the fame of the archbishop of Thessalonica, with a credit highly honourable to themselves and the age. John, whose education had led him through the various departments of polite and scientific learning, is known to us as a poet, as a grammarian, as a scholiast on the Theogony of Hesiod, as a commentator on the obscure production of Lycophron, entitled Cassandra, and by allegorical annotations on Homer. But his principal work is entitled, *Chiliades*, which is replete with various learning on history, fables, and philosophy, and written in a peculiar kind of verse, if verse it may be called, which, neglecting quantity, observes only a fixed number of syllables*. I may, perhaps, before have made the observation, in regard to all these scholiasts and commentators—whatever may have been their age or country—that, unless their contemporaries had called for it, they would not have subjected themselves to the labour of researches so uninviting and jejune. An age of scholiasts is an age of readers.

* See Bib. G. l. v. c. 42. t. x.

APP. I.

The closing Events of the Century.

After the death of Manuel in 1180, the remaining years of the twelfth century formed a period of revolution, of calamity, and blood, under his infant son Alexius; under Andronicus, the murderer of that son and the usurper of his throne; under Isaac Angelus, who punished and succeeded to the last tyrant; and under Alexius Angelus his brother, by whom Isaac was dethroned, in 1195. It was now, and long had been, the savage practice, when death was not inflicted on an enemy, whose return to power was apprehended, to deprive him of his sight.

In the reign of Isaac Angelus, when Jerusalem had been retaken by the puissant Saladin, Frederic Barbarossa, opening the third crusade, marched by Constantinople on his way to Palestine. In the following year 1190, two other armies, one of which was commanded by the French king Philip Augustus, the other by our Richard, with a better prospect of success—trusting their hopes rather to the sea, than to the treachery of the Byzantine court—embarked at different ports, and, in the spring of the year 1191, joined the besieging army before the walls of Ptolemais. The jealousies, which soon divided these princes, when Philip returned to France, and the heroic achievements of Richard in Palestine, are well known to every reader; and it is known to every reader that a crusade, which had drained Germany, France, and England, of treasure and of their ablest warriors, could boast only of the capture of the single city of Ptolemais; whilst Jerusalem, and all the fruits of former victories, a few excepted, were irrecoverably lost.

The Thirteenth Century.

The western champions of the cross had hitherto in general

passed the capital of the East: and as their transit was rapid, or the circumstances, which attended and often harassed their march, permitted little attention to any thing except the immediate concerns of war, we might be disposed to excuse, if not to justify, their apparent contempt of the literature and attainments of the Greeks. But, will these sturdy warriors display the same insensibility, ignorance, and barbarism, when a surprising series of events shall effect a more permanent establishment, and force the valuable or the curious productions of literature or the arts upon their observation?

Constantinople taken by the Latins.

A band of French nobles, allied with the republic of Venice, had taken the cross, at the head of an army which was not formidable in point of numbers; but instead of directing their course towards Palestine, they sailed directly for Constantinople, with the design of restoring Isaac Angelus to the throne. This prince had implored their aid against the violence of his brother Alexius the usurper, as I mentioned, of the empire. They appeared before the city in the summer of the year 1203. After the first attack, which was vigorously repelled, the usurper basely withdrew into Thrace; and Isaac, who was released from his dungeon, upon the hard conditions which his son had before stipulated, was in conjunction with him, reseated on the throne. The gates of Constantinople, and the palaces and churches, with their sumptuous and splendid decorations, were thrown open to the free inspection of the Latins. They spent the following winter in the suburb of Galata; but it proved fatal to the empire. Through malicious design or mistaken zeal, a large portion of the city, in one of its most populous regions was reduced to ashes;

APP. I.

soon after which the people, who were become furious, demanded a more worthy leader. They found one in a prince of the house of Ducas, who was also named Alexius. This chief imbrued his hands in the blood of the young emperor: and his father soon followed him to the tomb: when the war was again renewed, and the city again besieged.

It was taken by storm, and suffered all the horrors of pillage and devastation. The Latin narrator*, who was present, observes, that "since the creation so rich a prize had not been made:" and the Greek historian†, who was also an eyewitness of the catastrophe, describes the miseries which his fellow citizens and himself endured. In comparing these accounts, we find that the rapacity, licentiousness, and sacrilege which are extenuated by the one, are aggravated by the other. In order to insult the fallen city, the manners, the dress, the customs of the Greeks, were exposed to ridicule or scorn in ludicrous exhibitions; and pens, ink-stands, and paper were displayed in the streets, as the ignoble arms or contemptible instruments of a race of students and of scribes. The Greek historian, in return, reproaches the conquerors with the grossest ignorance; but, in the torrent of his invective and lamentation, he seems not to be sensible, that no epithets which the

* Godfrey Villehardouin, Marshal of Champagne, who accompanied the expedition, and who wrote in the rude idiom of his age and country, an account of it.

† Nicetas of Chona in Phrygia, a senator, and principal secretary in the Byzantine court, author of the *Annals* of his own times.

copiousness of his own language could supply, were sufficiently strong to express the effeminate, and dastardly conduct of his countrymen; when four hundred thousand men, within the city, and capable of bearing arms in its defence, were subdued by a handful of Latin warriors.

As these warriors first approached the sovereign city, they are said to have gazed with admiration on this capital of the East, rising from her seven hills, and towering over the continents of Europe and Asia. With sensations of apprehension, they contemplated her long chain of bulwarks, with her lofty ramparts crowded with soldiers and spectators. The domes and spires of five hundred palaces and churches were, at the same time, in view. When they entered, the objects of internal magnificence were not less striking and impressive. From an early period the noblest monuments of taste had been collected and carefully preserved. Of these many now perished by fire, but the greater part by the unfeeling avarice of the conquerors: and we cannot but assent to the complaints and invectives of the Byzantine historian. He mentions and describes with too many flowers of speech perhaps, but with much feeling, several statues of exquisite workmanship, which were melted into money for the payment of the troops, or destroyed from mere wantonness; and the warm expressions of the writer have been adduced* to prove, that, in the thirteenth century, there were Greeks, who had a taste for the fine arts, and felt an enthusiastic admiration of their beauty.

* *Philological Inquiries*, p. III. p. 301—312.

APP. I. Monuments of Art destroyed.

Among those which are mentioned, the principal are 1. The victorious charioteers cast in bronze, standing aloft in their chariots, and wheeling round the goal. 2. The Sphynx, river-horse, and crocodile, which had probably been transported from Egypt. 3. The she-wolf suckling Romulus and Remus, a subject alike pleasing to the *old* and the *new* Romans, which might have been the very work to which Virgil is supposed to have alluded in describing the shield of Æneas *. 4. An eagle holding and tearing a serpent in his talons, which the Byzantines ascribed not to a human artist, but to the magic power of the philosopher Apollonius, who, by this talisman, effected the deliverance of the city from such venomous reptiles. 5. An ass and his driver, two statues brought from Actium, and there erected by Augustus to commemorate a verbal omen, which had seemed to predict his victory. 6. An equestrian statue of Bellerophon and Pegasus. 7. A square and lofty obelisk of brass, the sides embossed with a variety of picturesque and rural scenes: birds singing, rustics labouring, or playing on their pipes; sheep bleating; lambs skipping; the sea; and a scene of fish and fishing; naked Cupids laughing, playing, and pelting each other with apples; and, on the summit, a female figure turning with the slightest breath, and thence denominated *the attendant of the wind.* 8. Paris, or the Phrygian shepherd, presenting to Venus the golden Apple. 9. A Helen, delineated by Nicetas, in all the charms of beauty and elegance; but who still was unable " to mitigate these immiti-

* Æn. VIII. 633.

gable, these iron-hearted men." 10. A Hercules, by the hand of Lysippus, of such magnitude, that his thumb was equal to the waist, his leg to the stature of a common man; his chest ample, his shoulders broad, his limbs strong and muscular, his hair curled, his aspect commanding. Without his bow, or quiver, or club, his lion's skin, formidable even in brass, carelessly thrown over him, he was seated on an osier basket, his right leg and arm extended, his left knee bent and supporting his elbow, his head reclining on his left hand, his countenance indignant and pensive. "Yet this Hercules, being such as here delineated, this very Hercules did not these men spare!" 11. A colossal statue of Juno, erected in the forum of Constantine. 12. A Minerva, also colossal, thirty feet in height, and representing with admirable spirit, the attributes and character of the goddess; "so exquisitely moulded, that the lips, as the spectator fixed his eyes, seemed to speak: the veins were visible; the body, where not covered by the flowing robe, soft and delicately turned, and presenting the life and vigour of animation." But I must remark, that this statue was broken in pieces, after the first siege, by a mob of drunken citizens, wildly inferring from the position of the eyes, and the right hand turning toward the Latin camp, that she was inviting the enemy to enter the walls. "Self-armed for destruction," concludes the historian, "this infatuated people would not suffer, even in bronze, to remain amongst them, the image of fortitude and wisdom*."

* I have copied in these extracts from Nicetas the translations, sometimes of Mr. Gibbon (vol. v. p. 171.) sometimes of Mr. Harris (Phil. Ing. p. 111.) as my edition contains not the enumeration of all the statues. See the above two authors.—The original I have since seen, and could copy from it many other curious specimens.

APP. I. What was the fate of some, or many, of the Byzantine libraries, is not related. Paper or parchment held out no temptation to avarice; and the pilgrims, feeling no predilection for science, particularly when locked up in an unknown tongue, would not be solicitous to seize or purloin the works of the learned. But we cannot doubt that many perished in the three fires which raged in the city; and some writings of antiquity, which are known to have existed in the twelfth century, are now lost. What then existed, we learn with certainty, from the valuable compilations of which I have lately spoken. The literature of the Greeks, which had been expelled by conquering armies, particularly from the eastern provinces, almost centered within the walls of the capital; and it must, therefore, on the present occasion, have been nearly destroyed in the mass. The victors might not, indeed, have been quite so gross as the historian, in the anguish of his sufferings, represents them: but still, I suspect, that he did not much exceed the truth, when he called them του καλου ἀνεραστοι βαρβαροι, "barbarians without any feeling of the beautiful and the fair."

But as they knew how to conquer, they knew how to divide the spoils of conquest. Baldwin, count of Flanders, was unanimously chosen emperor, with a fourth part of the Grecian monarchy for his share; and the remaining portions, which had been divided according to agreement, into two moieties, were distributed amongst the Venetians and the adventurers from France.

He who is fond of history may peruse the annals of the reigns of the five Latin princes, who, from 1204 to 1261,

filled, if they did not honour, the Byzantine throne. At the expiration of which period it was recovered by the Greeks.

The Effects of the Capture on Learning.

It belongs not to me to trace the advantages which were derived from this event, except in a literary point of view; but I will merely note it as a curious incident in the labyrinth of human politics, that, though the pretended motive for the capture and detention of Constantinople, and that which reconciled the timorous consciences of many to the measure, was the supposed facilities which it would hereafter afford to the crusading armies in their march to the East, not one of these armies took that route in the three expeditions which ensued. The last, indeed, but only the last, under Louis IX., in 1270, was posterior to the recapture. And as to letters, the advantages to either nation, are rather problematical. Their animosity, which was embittered by religious differences, did not permit any amicable intercourse, in which instruction is given and returned: but as the languages, in the lapse of years, forced themselves into use, some reciprocal benefit might be derived from the interchange of conversation and of books. The Latin tongue was certainly diffused; and though its modern productions neither demanded nor merited notice, those of higher antiquity, both ecclesiastical and profane, would command the attention of scholars; and we know that, in process of time, many were honoured with a Greek version. As the Latins were yet insensible of their intellectual wants, they viewed with indifference, the great literary proficiency of the Greeks; and a more auspicious period was still to be an object of future hope. But this period was, I think, accelerated by the present intercourse with a polished people; by

APP. I.

the experience of many social conveniences; by the view of the refinements in architecture and the other arts; and by the knowledge, however imperfect, which they acquired of a language, the harmony of whose sounds attested its excellence, even to a barbarous ear; and in which few could be ignorant, that works of immortal renown had been composed. Add to this, that many Greek scholars—who could no longer enjoy repose at home—emigrated into different regions of the East and West; and thus contributed, in some degree, to promote the cause of learning, and to awaken, perhaps, the first feelings of a curiosity, which other events more fully roused into action. It may then be allowed, that at least some benefit was derived from the conquest of Byzantium, and the reigns of the Latin princes, during an interval of sixty years.

Good Conduct of the expelled Princes.

While these princes occupied the Byzantine throne, some fragments of the empire remained in the hands, or were recovered by the valour of its former masters. Theodore Lascaris erected his standard at Nice, in Bithynia; and two dukedoms or states were formed at Trebizond, and in Epirus; which became the general resort of the fugitive Greeks. Theodore was soon honoured with the title of emperor; and in him, and in his immediate successor, John Ducas Vataces, Nice could boast of two princes as fit to reign, as any who had graced the throne of Constantinople. Their joint lives reached from 1204 to 1255: and, under the latter prince—whilst no moment was lost, which could be employed for the recovery of the empire—we may admire the peaceful measures of his administration, his solicitude to promote the education of youth, and the revival of learning. He was wont to say,

that a king and a philosopher are the two most eminent characters of human society; that is, as he probably meant to say, provided the first possessed the qualities of the second *.

Theodore II., the son of Vataces, was not endowed with the princely talents of his father; but some records are extant of his learning, particularly that in which he appeared as a theologian. He died after a reign of three years, when we come to his infant son, John Lascaris, and to the illustrious Michael Palæologus, his guardian and associate in the empire, in the second year of whose reign, the Latins were expelled, and Michael ascended the throne of Byzantium.

Nicetas and other Writers.

However solicitous Vataces may have been to promote the revival of learning, it must be evident that the unsettled circumstances of the times would not admit much to be done. Yet, under all their disadvantages, the Greeks still retained a portion of their former spirit; and did not abandon the cause of literature. Among the historians, we find Nicetas of Chona, whom I have often mentioned. He was educated under the eye of his brother Michael, who, he says, was a man to whom no science was unknown. He was peculiarly eloquent; and afterwards filled the metropolitan chair of Athens. Admitted into the Byzantine court, Nicetas raised himself to the honours of senator, judge of the veil, and great logothete: offices, of which we often read in the annals

* See on these reigns, the *Histories* of Geor. Acropolita, Geor. Pachymer, and Nicephorus Gregoras, of whom I shall hereafter speak.

APP. I.

of the times. He filled this station, when Constantinople fell into the hands of the Latins. His own adventures are feelingly described, when he escaped from the city with his wife and family, and overtook the patriarch riding on an ass, without attendants, and almost without apparel. He then retired to Nice, with other fugitives. Here he composed his *Annals*, from the death of Alexius Comnenus, in 1118, to the year 1206. Many sound reflections are dispersed through the work, which though it is not destitute of classical taste, is yet marred by some affectation, and, after the fall of his country, the author exhausts attention by his complaints, and inveighs against the Latins without moderation. In the common editions, some passages, which are highly curious, are uniformly omitted. Other works came from the pen of Nicetas *.

Contemporary with Nicetas was the chronologist Joel, who has brought down his record to the same fatal period: and after them, at no great distance, came George Acropolite, who was greatly celebrated for his erudition, and employed in many offices, first at Nice, and then at Constantinople, after the restoration of the empire. His *Chronicle* is particularly valuable, from the genuine account of events which it contains, in which himself bore a part, from 1203 to 1261, during the reigns of the Nicene emperors. But when we hear him described as a scholar, with whom no other may be compared; as equal to Aristotle in philosophy,

* See Bib. G. L. v. c. 5. t. VI.

and to Plato in the Attic charms of a sublime theology; we cannot assent to the truth of such exaggerated praise *. APP. I.

George Pachymer, another Greek historian, at the age of nineteen, returned with his countryman to Constantinople; where, after some years spent in the acquisition of general learning, he became a principal officer in the palace of the patriarch, and took an active part in the transactions which were carried on by Michael Palæologus, in order to effect an union between the church of the East and that of the West. On this important question, he sided with the opposers of the union. Pachymer was also a great admirer of the Peripatetic philosophy, on which he wrote commentaries; and his disquisitions are said to have been numerous on other branches of learning. He is best known by his *History* of the Reigns of Michael and Andronicus Palæologus; the style of which, though formed on the ancient model, is censured as tumid, ambiguous, and obscure; yet not altogether void of elegance in an age, when exuberance was deemed a proof of knowledge †.

A little before these men, flourished Theodorus Balsamon, patriarch of Antioch—which See he never visited, as it was then occupied by the Latins.—He was a scholar, so extensively acquainted with the whole science of the laws, ecclesiastical and civil, that Greece, though so fertile in genius, is

* See Cave Hist. Lit. sec. XIII. Bib. G. L. v. c. 5. t. VI.

† Ibid. Brucker, Hist. Phil. t. III.

APP. I. said at no time to have produced a greater man. In his attempt, however, to ascend the Byzantine chair, he was outwitted by Isaac Angelus *.

During the temporary translation of this chair to Nice, and after its return, it was continued to be filled by prelates of talents and of science. Such were Germanus, of whom many works are extant; Arsenius, who returned with Palæologus to Constantinople, where he incurred his anger by his pastoral firmness in censuring the savage treatment of their pupil, the young emperor, whom the tyrant deprived of his sight; and John Veccus, the strenuous advocate with Palæologus for the union with the Latin church, on which account he suffered much from his countrymen. "In Greek literature," says the historian Nicephorus, "Veccus was not the first; but in quickness of parts, in natural eloquence, and in the science of theology, compared with him, other men were children †."

Nicephorus Blemmides, the preceptor of Theodorus Lascaris, was conspicuous in general learning, as were many others, whose names have come down to us: and I may here repeat, what I have before noticed, that under all the disadvantages of the times, what very much kept alive an attention to letters, was the unceasing animosity between the churches. The questions which they discussed, though apparently of no great importance, were connected with antiquity, and necessitated some extent of research and sagacity

* Nicet. in Isaaco. See Bib. G. L. v. c. 33. t. IX. † Niceph. Græc. Hist. l. v.

of observation; while the ambition of victory not only in historical proof and logical subtlety, but in literary composition, instigated the combatants on each side. Nor was the contest always between Greeks and Latins. The cause of the latter was not unfrequently abetted by the former, which produced a favourable diversion, and gave new life to the controversy. The patriarch Veccus took this side, as did the eminent scholar, George Metochita, of whom I shall soon speak *.

State of the Greek Empire after its Restoration.

The recapture of Byzantium did not put an end to all intercourse with the Latins. The barons, indeed, and the principal families, retired with their emperor; but the lower orders remained, who were attached to the country, and indifferent to the change of masters. Policy also dictated to Palæologus to encourage the Venetians, the Genoese, and the Pisans, who at this time engrossed the trade of Europe, to continue in the capital, where the benefit of their commercial industry had been long experienced. Their factories were, therefore, maintained; their former privileges confirmed; the jurisdiction of their own magistrates established; and their respective quarters allotted in the city, and in the suburb of Galata. I wish this to be noticed as a fortunate event, as it opened a channel of perpetual intercourse, through which not only commerce, but learning, with its professors, and the arts of a more polished life, might find their way,

* See Cave Hist. Lit.

APP. I. first into Italy, and thence to the other regions of the West.

The reign of Palæologus contains little, which is worthy of record, in this view of Grecian letters. He provoked the censures of his own church, by the cruel treatment of John Lascaris; and incurred the displeasure of that church, by insincere attempts to effect an union with the church of Rome. He was justly apprehensive of an attack from the West, particularly from Charles of Anjou, the powerful king of the Sicilies; and in order to avert it, policy dictated, that the friendship of the Roman bishop, who was now the sovereign lord of the western world, should be conciliated, by submission to the terms of his communion. He and many prelates of his church made a profession of submitting, and the impending storm was averted: but the thin veil of delusion was apparent through all the measures of a complicated negociation; and on the death of Michael in 1282, the hollow union was dissolved by unanimous consent. Even the first care of Andronicus, his son and successor, was, to restore tranquillity by reversing all the acts of his father—in which he had himself joined—and by re-establishing, on a firmer basis, the wall of separation between the churches.

Fourteenth Century. The long reign of Andronicus, from 1282 to 1332, was a period of trouble, and from the rise of the Ottoman power, one of ominous menace to the empire. This prince has been celebrated as a model of the most perfect eloquence, and we may find in the life of his minister, Theodorus Metochita, some facts, which are not devoid of literary interest. Even

the historian Nicephorus does not forget to produce himself, as a figure not unworthy of notice; but his praise of the Emperor is disgustingly fulsome, and its style will, I fear, exhibit a specimen of fallen oratory.

Literary Character of Andronicus.

Satisfied, he says*, with his own progress in oratory, and in philosophical researches, and satiated with astronomy—by which he understands the inquiry after future events—he resolved to betake himself to the court. He had understood, that the palace of Andronicus might be deemed, owing to long experience and the exercise of talents, not only the school of honourable discipline and of virtue, but the gymnasium of eloquence and of erudition; and that the conversation of the prince, which was seasoned by prudent and ingenuous observations, was well-worthy the ear of the learned. He was kindly received; and was at the time in his seven and twentieth year. On this occasion, and as a proof of his own talents, he addressed to the Emperor the discourse which I mentioned as "disgustingly fulsome."

He observes, that had the age produced other men, fit to celebrate the praises of Andronicus, silence would to him have been a first duty; though he is compelled to own, that he alone could speak fitly of his actions, who should possess his eloquence, by the charms of which all had been surpassed, as all had been eclipsed by the constellation of his virtues.

* Niceph. Greg. Hist. Rom. l. VIII.

APP. I.

Of these virtues he selects his prudence, which he calls his wisdom, of which every one has heard, but he who has lost the sense of hearing. "But so sweet are the accents of your voice, that while it delights those who hear it, it still follows them as they depart, hangs upon the ear, and adheres to the memory, as the taste of honey on the tongue. The groves and meadows, and forests, resound, it is true, in the season of spring, with the songs of their feathered citizens; and other places at other times: but all the seasons of the year are charmed with your eloquence; and the whole earth is its theatre." On this theme he dilates; speaks of Orpheus, and of Nestor, of Socrates, of Plato, of Pericles, all of whom he outdid, as much as the shout of Stentor exceeded the shouts of all other men. "The song of the Sirens," he adds, "was once highly celebrated; but it could not be listened to without danger; and they alone were safe, whose ears were closed with wax: but while you harangue, we are so far from recurring to this artifice, that we lament, that nature did not make us all ear. For what Demostheness do you not excel by the arrangement and energy of your discourses? What Platos, by the extent and power of your genius? And whom have you not fixed in more permanent admiration, than, the hearers of Socrates felt in that Attic age? As the fields are clothed in the beautiful variety of flowers, so is your speech attired with the blandishments of persuasion, and the allurements of wit."

There is much more in the same strain; but this sample may suffice to characterise the eloquence of the age. He tells us that his address was well received; and served as a

first step to further honours. But, if Andronicus really possessed any share of these high accomplishments, we may collect from the same historian, that they contributed neither to the benefit of the state, nor to the peace and happiness of his own family. From the facility, however, with which Nicephorus found admittance into the palace, and from the encouragement which he experienced, we may further collect, that literature was still admired in all the vicissitudes of bad fortune, and that the throne had not withdrawn its patronage.

This patronage was extended, at the same time, to many scholars of great literary merit: but when other qualifications promised more pliancy of disposition than intellectual attainments, the historian* observes, that Andronicus, like his predecessors, readily lost sight of science. In this manner one Nipho was chosen to fill the patriarchal chair, "a man utterly ignorant of profane and sacred learning, and who did not even know how to form the letters of his own tongue." But he had other talents, though little adapted to the duties of his high station. To Nipho, however, and to some others who were equally illiterate, let me oppose John Glycys, raised to the same see, a prelate who was eminent for learning, and whose eloquence was fashioned on the true Attic model. "For my own instruction," says Nicephorus, "and to give a due polish to my diction, I had sedulously cultivated the

* Hist. Rom. l. VII.

APP. I.

society of this able scholar, for I was peculiarly devoted to the art of oratory." We have seen what this oratory was, and from that specimen we may infer, what was meant by the "Attic style," in the conception of Nicephorus.

Gregory of Cyprus was another scholar who graced the court of Andronicus, and the chair of Byzantium. He also was famed for eloquence. The historian* observes, that "by the ductility of his genius, and close application, he raised, as it were, from the grave, and produced to open day, the elegant taste of Grecian literature, and those Attic numbers, which had long lain buried in oblivion." But he was envious of others' fame, and treated his predecessor and others, with great cruelty, who had espoused the cause of the Latins on the question of the union. He was finally crushed by the storm which broke on his own head; but he merited peculiar praise, by the attention which he gave to the education of the ecclesiastics, and by providing the churches with able ministers.

Theodorus Metochita.

It is time to speak of Theodorus Metochita. He was the principal minister, or logothete, in the Byzantine court, during the last years of Andronicus; and the friend who was nearest to his heart. The historian Nicephorus also gloried in his friendship, which he has returned with no scanty meed of praise. "By natural talents," he says†, "and persever-

* Hist. Rom. l. vi. † Ibid. l. vii.

ing labour, and the powers of memory, he had risen to the most elevated point of science. If asked, what ancient sages, or the learned of modern times, had written? his replies seemed to be read from their works. In our intercourse with him, therefore, we stood not in need of books, for he was himself a living library, an oracle ever ready to give responses. I never heard of a scholar that could be compared with him. But when we reflect, that he would not accommodate his style of oratory to any ancient model, that he despised suavity of diction, that he would not check the exuberance of his fancy, it must be owned, that he laid himself open to censure. Pleased with his own manner, he pays no regard to our ears, and sometimes hurts them, as he who gathers roses is lacerated by the thorns. What his eloquence really was, may be understood from many things which he has written. In this he was truly admirable; that, though engaged in the most arduous concerns of the republic, and discharging them with an assiduity which seemed to indicate a mind free from every other pursuit, he never wanted leisure for his books; and was as much devoted to them in his evenings, as if the state had no place in his thoughts."

The mind of Theodorus, however, did not exclude many of the vain prejudices of the age. On a solemn occasion, the neighing of a painted horse, on which the champion St. George was represented, induced the Emperor and his logothete to look for its meaning "in certain prophetic writings;" and he returned from the consultation, silent and full of conjectural inquietude. His daughter, in order to draw the mysterious secret from his bosom, addressed him, as we are

APP. I.

told, with an eloquence which was peculiarly her own, and "would have done honour to the lips of Plato or Pythagoras." On the following day, the whole matter was communicated to the historian. He enjoyed the confidence of the logothete; by whom he had been initiated, after a trial of his integrity, in the *arcana* of astronomy, that is, the influence of the stars; and had been publicly promised "the heritage of his learning." He was, besides, the tutor of the son of Theodorus, and of his Attic daughter, to whom he explained the passages which they found obscure in profane and sacred authors. Having learned what was predicted by the omens, and trembling in every limb, Nicephorus had still courage to speak: when he laboured by examples drawn from ancient history, to shew; that the language of oracles was always ambiguous, and that they could not dismay the mind of a philosopher *.

Notwithstanding the superiority of his acquirements, the logothete was not, at all times, communicative. His disciple, therefore, again addressed him †. He states, that a reciprocal interchange of good offices is a law of society, by a compliance with which many benefits had been conferred, and immortal glory obtained. "But our age," he adds, "lies miserably neglected, while it can boast only of you, lighted up like a fire in the rigour of winter. Our temples, our walls, our groves, our porticoes, bestow a certain lustre on us; but

* Hist. Rom. l. VIII. † Ibid.

how weak and transitory! Open then the treasures of your mind, and save your name from oblivion; prove that you have not lived in vain, and be the herald of your own fame. Most learned of all men, whom the sun surveys, be to your country a Lycurgus or a Solon; and as Athens was honoured by her sages, do not you be forgetful of this our city. Unclose our eyes; point out to us the moderator, and the wondrous fabric of the world. Teach us, to what cause the prosperous events of life may be ascribed: to the uncontroulable influence of the stars, as the profane have imagined, or to the author of the universe. On this I have long hesitated. You have not to travel, as Pythagoras did, from Egypt to Attica, or, as Plato did, more than once to cross the Ionian sea; and then to tread the academic walks and groves. Your own house is your academy. There you may inculcate lessons of virtue; and the world will listen to your voice. Wisdom has often changed her station. From Egypt, her first abode, she migrated to the Persians and Chaldeans; from them she turned to the Athenians, but she, at length, deserted Athens; and now, like a bird frightened from its nest, she wanders, uncertain where to fix. Whether she will settle with us, or take her last flight to heaven, depends upon you."

Many universities were already opened in the West; some scholars had emigrated from Greece; Dante had lived in Italy; and in Italy, Petrarca and Boccaccio were soon to welcome wisdom, that is, literature and the arts, back to those seats, which she had formerly loved as she did Athens; and where her votaries were more numerous than had ever frequented her lessons in the schools of Byzantium.

APP. I.

After many years of ruinous contest with his grandson of the same name, Andronicus abdicated the throne, and died in a cell, in 1332; and his minister, Theodorus, having experienced the usual treatment of a fallen favourite, survived his master only thirty days*.

John Cantacuzenus.

The reign of the younger Andronicus, from the death of his grandsire, comprised only nine years; when he left the throne to his infant son John Palæologus, appointing, by his last testament, John Cantacuzenus to be his guardian, and the regent of the empire. Cantacuzenus was nobly descended: had been the firm friend of the late Emperor through all the vicissitudes of fortune; and—whether talents, literary attainments, or even virtue, were considered—might justly be regarded as the first and most deserving of the Greeks. Had he experienced, as his station demanded, a suitable return of obedience, he would doubtless have acted with a pure and zealous fidelity in the service of his pupil. But by the private machinations and open attacks of the Empress mother, the great Admiral Apaucus, and the patriarch, he was driven, in his own defence, reluctantly to draw the sword, and to assume the purple; which, after six years of civil discord and varied success, he deserved to wear. He wore it, however, without enjoying happiness: and when John Palæologus, impatient of all restraint, claimed his birthright, at the head of a powerful faction, Cantacuzenus, if we

* Niceph. Greg. Hist. Rom. l. x.

may believe his own declaration, descended from the throne in submissive deference to the voice of religion and of reason; and voluntarily embraced the monastic life*. This was in the year 1355.

We must now view him in the cells of Constantinople and Mount Athos, occupied in the offices of piety, or devoting his days to literary pursuits. Here he wrote his *History*, or the *Memoirs* of his own times, comprising a space of nearly forty years, from the revolt of the younger Andronicus, in 1320, to his own abdication of the empire. Could we suppose him, free from prepossessions, in the retired meditations of the cloister, a story, in the scenes of which he was a principal actor, would be calculated to inspire the most lively interest. But it is hardly possible not to harbour suspicions of his candour and his truth. The work is eloquent, but diffuse; and perhaps too eloquent, to be sincere. It is the apology, it has been said†, of the life of an ambitious statesman, not penetrating to the bottom of things, and laying open real councils, characters, and designs; but glancing lightly over the surface, and varnishing every transaction with his own praises and those of his friends. The motives of these men, continues the same critic, are always pure; their ends always legitimate; they conspire and rebel without any views of interest; and the violence, which they inflict or suffer, is celebrated as the spontaneous effect of reason and of virtue. The speeches, often prolix, and seldom interesting—

* Joan. Cantac. Hist. L. IV.

† Hist. of the Decline, &c. t. VI.

APP. I.

which the historian puts into his own mouth, or into that of others—may be deemed a copy of the ancient manner, but no proof of just taste. Nicephorus Gregoras is chargeable with the same affectation; but where this writer seems to have spoken fairly of Cantacuzenus, in abetting the designs of the younger Andronicus against the government of his grandfather, the holy recluse complains of the statement, as a false and malicious representation of his conduct. Let it then be admitted, after the most impartial enumeration, that the work of Cantacuzenus is covered with many blemishes; still, when it is considered as the production of a man, who had worn the purple, who was born in the highest circles of life, educated in dissipation, practised in intrigue, and inured to arms—a specimen of rarer talents will not easily be adduced; while it stands a noble monument of taste*, in the last decline of Grecian literature.

Nicephorus Gregoras.

As I have again mentioned Nicephorus, it may be proper to observe, that his life seems to have been protracted to a late period, and terminated in troubles. Though a layman, he was no stranger to theological studies; and the opinion which others expressed of his talents, seems to have aggravated the feeling of vanity, and to have inspired a love of disputation. His *History*, from the taking of Constantinople by the Latins, in 1204, to the death of the younger Andronicus, in 1341, contains much interesting matter, interspersed with just reflections, diversified by foreign facts, and recom-

* See Bib. G. l. v. c. 5. t. VI.

mended by the effusions of an affectionate regard for those, whose party he had espoused. But we have too often reason to reproach him with an inordinate love of his own oratory, which breaks the continuity of the narrative; and tires by an inane prolixity. His other works, biblical, dogmatical, devotional, philosophical, astronomical, grammatical, rhetorical, philological, poetical, and epistolary, if drawn from the dust in which most of them still repose, would fill many volumes; on which the learned Fabricius, addressing his reader, observes: "I beseech you, peruse the whole list, however long. In it you may find some things, pleasing by their subjects; of others you may lament the loss; and you may wish, that others were brought to light. You may not perhaps grieve that some have perished; as to myself, I have not unfrequently derived pleasure from the sight of such catalogues, when I observed, that my shelves were not laden with such useless, if not pernicious, lumber*." APP. I.

Nicephorus mentions a singular controversy, in which Cantacuzenus did not disdain, even when emperor, to take a part. This evinces how prone the Grecian mind was to indulge itself in metaphysical subtleties. It was not amongst them a new fancy, that, a celestial light was concealed in the deepest retirements of the soul, which might be discovered by meditation and keeping the eyes immoveably fixed on the middle region of the belly, and that thence an ineffable A Curious Controversy.

* Bib. G. l. v. c. 5. t. VI.

APP. I.

delight might be derived. If asked, what kind of light this was? They replied, that it was the glory of God, or that celestial radiance, which surrounded Christ during his transfiguration on Mount Thabor. Barlaam, a Calabrian monk, passing through Greece, and hearing of this mystic extravagance, treated it as a heresy, imposing on its abettors the opprobrious appellation of ομφαλοψυχοι, or *Navelists*; but he was opposed by Gregory Palamas, a man of no mean talents, who, having spent many years in the monastery of Mount Athos, was easily persuaded to espouse an opinion, in which he had been himself instructed, and which was peculiarly grateful to the monks of that place. The Grecian mind was soon universally engaged; and a synod was assembled on the subject at Constantinople, in which the younger Andronicus presided, which pronounced in favour of Palamas and the monks. Nicephorus laments, that he was prevented by indisposition from being present at this meeting. Barlaam thus worsted, left Greece, and returned to Italy: but the controversy was not closed, and other champions came forward. The dispute now turned upon the light seen on Mount Thabor, and on the nature and residence of the Deity. The followers of Palamas maintained, that the Supreme Being was encircled by an eternal light, distinct from his essence, with a view of which the three disciples were favoured; whilst the Barlaamites, on the contrary, affirmed that the properties of the Deity were not different from his nature or essence, and that no such light could be admitted. The court and the city continued to be involved. Other assemblies were therefore convened, the most remarkable of which was held in the year 1351, in which the theologian Cantacu-

zenus presided, when the Barlaamites received so fatal a blow, that they were forced to yield, and leave the victory to Palamas *.

Progress of the Turks.

At this moment a civil war raged in the empire; but it could not check the war of words: while the rising sun of every day might be said to witness the progress of the Ottoman arms; and some new member was severed from the sapless trunk. Nice, and Nicomedia, with the whole province of Bithynia, as far as the shores of the Bosphorus and Hellespont, had submitted; and all the territory of Asia Minor soon acknowledged the Moslem yoke. The monuments of classical and christian antiquity, which had ornamented the cities of Ephesus, Laodicea, Sardis, and Pergamus, were trampled in the dust; and that æra of desolation opened, the fatal effects of which the traveller laments, as he moves over the ruins of cities which were once the scenes of splendour and festivity. Before the fourteenth century had completed half its course, parties of the same Turks were invited into Europe, during the intestine quarrels of the throne; and in the reign of Cantacuzenus, Thrace beheld the establishment of a Turkish colony. When John Palæologus, in 1355, found himself sole master of the empire, it consisted only of a space of ground between the Propontis and the Euxine, of about fifty miles in length and thirty in breadth, with the city of Byzantium!

* Niceph. Greg. Hist. l. xi. Mosheim, vol. iii.; also Bib. G. l. v. c. 43, 44. t. x.

APP. I.

From this time, no contemporary historian details the events of the remaining thirty-six years of Palæologus, a period of hopeless disaster, during which we look in vain for any vestiges of science, or learning, though some studies might probably be prosecuted in a nation which was habitually studious. In the meantime, the Ottomans, under Amurath I. and then under his son, the Sultan Bajazet, extended their European conquests; the Byzantine throne was disgraced by civil discord; the capital was hemmed in by the vicinity of hostile armies; and its final overthrow was postponed only by the opportune intervention of the mighty Tamerlane.

Greek Anthologies.

But let me interpose a more pleasing subject. In the cells of a convent in Constantinople lived a recluse, named Maximus Planudes, a man of letters, and well versed in his own and in the Latin tongue. In the former he wrote many tracts on religious and miscellaneous subjects; and he translated from the Latin the *Commentaries* of Cæsar, the *Consolation* of Boethius, and some treatises of St. Augustin. I remarked, that, from the residence of the Latins in the East, their language was likely to be diffused, and their more ancient productions, ecclesiastical and profane, gradually to command the attention of scholars. But other works, beside those of a graver cast, found an admirer in Planudes. He translated the Metamorphoses of Ovid into Greek prose; and we may be allowed to think, that the more sombre musings of the cloister would be sometimes interrupted by the playful effusions of the Roman poet. The translator, it is plain, could not be a gloomy monk; and we have a further proof of his temper, in the compilation of another work. This was entitled, *Anthologia*, or a Collection of Epigrams and other short fugitive pieces.

Of these *flowers* of the Grecian muse there had been prior collections; and some, as those of Meleager and Philip of Thessalonica, of a very ancient date. To them, about the time of Justinian, succeeded Agathias, a citizen of Constantinople, who was followed, but after a long interval, by Maximus Planudes. These various collections, or garlands of flowers, are extant; from which the curious critic, as from more voluminous productions, has been enabled to pronounce on the more or less classical taste and character of the age, by which they were produced. Simplicity and purity of diction, combined with elegance, are conspicuous in Meleager and in Philip—the last of whom was coeval with Augustus Cæsar:—there is more labour, more conceit, more pomp of expression in Agathias; and equal, or perhaps more blemishes, in Planudes; but associated with a reserve which does him honour, and with a cautious rejection of what was immoral and obscene. Of him, however, it has rather severely been remarked, that he raked together the loose miscellanies and scattered fragments of his time, not aware that, by his exertions, he was bequeathing and perpetuating to succeeding ages the figure of his country, enfeebled, helpless, exhausted, and nearly sunk into dotage. Still, it is in the selection alone, unless when their own muse speaks, that such writers may be censured. The age must answer for the style; but they who are acquainted with the Greek Anthologies will, I think, admit that they furnished exquisite beauties in every age *. They relate, besides, to subjects that will be interesting as long as youth and gaiety de-

* See Bib. G. l. III. c. 28. t. II.

APP. I.

light; as long as wine and flowers and beauty captivate: or the contrary ideas of old age and death, of sickness, banishment, neglected love, or forsaken friendship, can excite a pleasing sorrow, or impress a tender melancholy.

Fifteenth Century.

On the death of Palæologus in 1391, his son Manuel was in possession of the throne, a prince, whose filial piety is recorded, and whose name also is on the list of authors, on account of some small tracts which remain, one of which, addressed to his son, treats of the "Study of the polite Arts*." This son was John Palæologus, who succeeded to his father, in 1425, of whom, and of his immediate predecessors, it has been feelingly remarked, that the histories of their lives are like the words of dying men, interrupted and imperfect, as if they sympathized with the condition of their agonizing country.

The Question of Union between the Churches.

In the preceding centuries, when danger threatened the empire, it had been a favourite measure with its rulers, to propose terms of union with the Roman church; the prelude to which they as regularly proposed, should be the succour of a powerful army. The friendly or hostile aspect, therefore, of the Greek emperors towards the pope and the Latins might, it has been ingeniously observed, be considered as the thermometer of their prosperity or distress. Within the last hundred years, the younger Andronicus and Cantacuzenus had in vain entered into a negotiation on this subject: John Palæologus had first entered into a secret treaty; and when that was

* Bib. G. l. v. c. 45. t. x.

inefficient, he himself visited the Roman court, as a suppliant, pledged himself to the belief of its doctrines, implored aid against the common enemy of the Christian name, and returned without effecting the object of his journey. Thirty years after his return, his son Manuel solicited the Latin powers, and passed also in person into Italy, into France, and England, every-where honoured, pitied, and praised, when shaping his course back through Germany, he reached his capital, with the conviction of experience, that the European kingdoms were as little disposed, as, from circumstances, they were able, effectually to contribute to his relief. In these successive measures—in all of which the point of ecclesiastical union, had apparently some share—there was no sincerity on the side of the court and church of Constantinople.

But when John Palæologus, the second of the name, succeeded to the throne, in 1425, he listened, it should seem, with some sincerity, to the proposal of meeting the pope in a general council, and of terminating the long agitated question. If effectual succours could not now be obtained from the West, it was evident that the throne of Byzantium must fall. A negotiation was opened; the fathers, who were assembled at Basil, and who had quarrelled with Eugenius IV., styling themselves the representatives and judges of the Catholic church, pressed Palæologus to join their meeting. On his side Eugenius was not less active, and his invitation and offers were conveyed in language more conciliatory and respectful. The emperor hesitated: but finally took his resolution, and embarked on board the Roman gallies, with a numerous retinue. He was accompanied by Joseph, the Byzantine patriarch, with his proper officers;—twenty-one prelates of the

APP. I.

first rank, of whom some represented the bishops of other sees, and three, also, were vicars of the patriarchal chairs of Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Antioch; monks and men of learning, who held various offices about the person of the emperor or in the church, who were designed to display the sanctity and the science of that church and of their country.

What was the precise number of persons convened for this solemn occasion, does not appear; but from the names of many that are recorded, and from the conviction felt by the Greeks, that they should be greatly out-numbered in a Latin assembly, we may conclude that they would be careful, as far as their attendance could be procured, not to omit any, whose talents or attainments might ensure, if not a final victory, at least some temporary triumph, to their cause. We may then safely affirm, that the Roman gallies were freighted with the living literature of Greece.

These gallies first anchored at Venice, and thence the strangers proceeded to Ferrara, where the Pontiff was, and where, after a delay of six months, the council was opened in the month of October, 1438.

Council of Ferrara and Florence.

Four principal questions had been agitated between the two churches: 1. The use of leavened or unleavened bread in the sacrifice of the altar. 2. The nature of purgatory. 3. The procession of the holy Spirit, and the addition of the Latins to the creed, of the words *filioque*. 4. The supremacy of the Roman bishop. The two last points were deemed the most important; and though the Greeks had for a long time,

been little inclined to admit the absolute primacy of the Roman see, it was on the points of the third article, that the minds of the Eastern churches were more immoveably fixed. Ten champions, on each side, were chosen to manage the debates; and in the various conferences and discussions which ensued, it is not easy to decide, by whom the greatest acuteness, address, learning, or eloquence, was displayed. Bessarion, the metropolitan of Nice, and Mark of Ephesus, were the principal Greek speakers; the first, deeply versed in ecclesiastical science, and powerfully impressive, but conciliating and ever master of himself: the latter, equal, perhaps, in learning, but froward, untractable, contentious, and skilled in the management of offensive war. After sixteen sessions, many of which were passed in warm debates, in which little advance towards pacification was made, the synod was translated to Florence.

Here, in the first session, John Palæologus entered into some discussion with the celebrated Roman cardinal, Julian Cæserini: after which the debates, on the procession of the divine spirit, were resumed, and continued with much vehemence. But was concord to arise from litigation? The subject was exhausted; the resources only of the combatants, in attack or defence, were inexhaustible; and the return of the bishops to their churches, and of the emperor to his capital, would no longer be delayed. "We will dispute no longer," observed the Greeks in a deputation to their adversaries: "disputation generates only strife: abundant answers are ever ready to what we advance; and while we listen to you, we perceive, that there can be no end of speaking. Let some other means

APP. I. of union be devised." In an elaborate and impressive address to his brethren, Bessarion of Nice urged the necessity of union, if they would rescue themselves, their religion, and their country from inevitable ruin. Other conferences were held; professions of faith were presented, and mutually rejected. But, no expedient which was devised proved successful, when the emperor, impatient of further delay, proposed, that they should come to a peremptory decision. The Greeks severally gave their opinions: which, as usual, were not unanimous; but they finally agreed, with the exceptions of Mark of Ephesus and Sophronius of Anchiala, that the doctrine of the Latins, on the procession of the divine spirit, might be admitted, and the union established.

In this stage of the business, Palæologus judged it prudent not to lose the favourable moment, and to treat with his Holiness on the measure of granting succour. A negotiation was opened; and Eugenius agreed: that—1. the Pope should furnish the Greeks with ships, and bear the expenses of their return: 2. that he should annually maintain three hundred soldiers and two gallies to guard the city of Constantinople: 3. that the gallies, which conveyed pilgrims to Jerusalem, should sail to Constantinople: 4. that, when the emperor had occasion for twenty gallies for six months, or of ten for a year, the Roman bishop should supply them; 5. if land forces were wanted, that the latter should earnestly solicit the Christian princes to march to the relief of Byzantium.

The great point of controversy was settled: but some dif-

ficulties remained, of which the principal, was the question of the Roman primacy. On this, however, they finally agreed; and the *Act of Union* being committed to writing, it was signed on the fifth of July, 1439, by the emperor, the Greeks, and by the Latin members. Mark of Ephesus alone remained unshaken*. APP. I.

If the calculations of Palæologus, on the success of the union were very sanguine, he must have been miserably disappointed, when the Venetian gallies, on board of which he and his Greek prelates returned, touched the Byzantine shore. Murmurs and dissatisfaction were every-where perceived; the subscribers were treated as men, who had sacrificed their conscience and the honour of their ancient faith, to the lure of worldly interest; and it soon appeared, that even that was a baseless fabric, as few among them had the resolution to justify their own work, or to defend the principles of the union. Mark of Ephesus alone was received as the champion of orthodoxy; and it was not long, though the emperor stood firm to the union, before the greater part of the unionists withdrew their names from the act, and, with an increased zeal, abetted the former schism. Such was the state of things when Palæologus died in the year 1448, leaving the vain shadow of an empire, but the sad reality of peril and of care to his brother Constantine. The Greeks return from Florence.

I have briefly stated the leading incidents of this transac-

* See the Acts of the Florentine Synod. Con. Gen. t. VIII.

APP. I.

tion, because it was intimately connected with the interests of letters; and because, as I observed, whoever, at the time, among the Greeks, possessed the reputation of learning, was selected to attend the deputation. The talents which the speakers displayed, were certainly eminent, and their cause, in some points, was tenable: but the determination of the emperor to effect the union, from motives of the most urgent policy; the despondency of the Greeks, when they thought of their falling country; the defection of the learned Bessarion, when his aid was most wanted; and the acute reasoning of the adverse party, whom the long established discipline of their schools had rendered adepts in the art of disputation, ensured to the Latins, from the first opening of the synod, a certainty of victory."

I have already spoken of Bessarion, who remained behind, or soon returned to Italy. Amongst the others, the most signal were Mark of Ephesus, who has been sufficiently noticed; the Russian metropolitan Isidore, who, with Bessarion, went over to the Latins; Gregorias Melissenus, the confessor of Palæologus, and a great promoter of the union; Georgius Scholarius, called also Gennadius, a man, who was esteemed by some as "the most learned of the Greeks*;" Georgius Gemistus †, a Platonic philosopher, in the synod opposed to the Latin scholastics, and of whom even Bessarion said, "that he was an honour to his country, and would continue to be its ornament;" Sylvester Syropulus, the chief

* See Bib. G. l. v. c. 43. t. x. † Ibid. p. 729.

attendant on the Byzantine patriarch, who strenuously defended the cause of his church, but was prevailed upon to sign the union, and who afterwards compiled the *History* of the Council *. APP. I.

As these men were really famed for learning—though they might give way to the Latins—on the particular points in dispute, and as their stay in Italy was little short of two years, the incident would naturally tend to diffuse a more general knowledge of the Greek language, and to recommend the attainments of the strangers to imitation. We know that the mind of the Italians had already been carefully prepared; and that curiosity was every-where alive. The friend to christian peace may, therefore, lament, that the fruits of the Florentine union were so transient; but a friend to letters, when he contemplates the benefits which were derived from the synod in the reviving state of intellectual curiosity in the West, will rejoice that it was held.

Fall of the Eastern Empire.

After the departure of the Greeks, Eugenius had not been unmindful of his engagements; and a crusade was formed against the Turks, which, after some success, was calamitously terminated by the battle of Warna. In 1451, Mahomet II. the son of the second Amurath, ascended the Ottoman throne; in 1453, Constantinople was besieged; and, after fifty-three days, was taken by storm, on the 29th of May, the Emperor Constantine having fallen in the breach. In the devastation

* See Hist. Literat. sec. xv. Syn. Florent. Con. t. viii.

APP. I. which ensued, we cannot but deplore, amidst other losses; the destruction of many monuments of art, and the dispersion of libraries. One hundred and twenty thousand manuscripts are said to have disappeared: but of the classic treasures of Greece an inestimable portion had already been deposited in Italy; and the art of printing had been invented. On the evening of the day of the capture, the Sultaun entered the imperial city in triumph; viewed its still remaining monuments; and proceeded to establish the forms of a new government, and the rites of the Moslem worship.

Its Three last Historians.

Three Greek historians, who have recorded the more recent events of the empire, Michael Ducas, Laonicus Chalcocondyles, and Georgius Phranea, survived its fall. Of Ducas we know little till after the ruin of his country, when he withdrew to the island of Lesbos, and there served its prince, who was a christian tributary of the Turkish Sultaun. His *Byzantine History* begins with the year 1341, and comes down to 1462, when Lesbos also was captured by the Turks*. The work of Chalcocondyles comprises, in ten books, the Greek and Turkish history from 1300 to 1463. He was an Athenian; but nothing is known of his life and character †. From his early youth, Phranea was employed in the service of the state and palace. His legations were numerous, his military commands conspicuous; and he was in the highest favour with his last master Constantine, when, after his

* See Hist. Liter. sec xv. also Bib. G. l. v. c. 5. t. vi.

† Bib. G. ibid.

death, which he witnessed, and the fall of the imperial city, he was carried into captivity, and sold as a slave. On the recovery of his liberty, he joined the despot of Peloponnesus, Thomas, the brother of Constantine, whom he served, till that country also was subdued. He then bade a last farewel to Greece, revisited many cities of Italy, and finally rested in the island of Corcyra, where he took the monastic habit, and wrote his *History*. It relates, in four books, from 1260 to 1477, the events of the Byzantine state, to the melancholy catastrophe of which he was an eyewitness *.

State of the Greek Language.

But though Greece, or rather its capital, Byzantium, could, to its latest period, boast of literature and of learned men, had not its language been signally corrupted by the innovating hand of time, and the operations of war and commerce? It is agreed, that many words of foreign origin had been admitted into the national dialect; but that a purer idiom was spoken in the court, and taught in the schools. A learned Italian, who had long resided at Constantinople, described the state of its language about thirty years before the conquest of the Turks. "The vulgar speech," says he, "has been depraved by the people, and infected by the arrivals of strangers and merchants, who daily flock to the city and mingle with its inhabitants. It is from the disciples of such a school that the Latins received the translations of Plato and Aristotle; so obscure in sense, and so vapid in

* See Bib. G. l. v. c. 5. t. vi.

APP. I.

spirit. But the Greeks, who have escaped this contagion, and whom we ourselves both follow and imitate, even now, in familiar discourse, speak the tongue of Aristophanes and Euripides, of the historians, orators, and philosophers of Athens; and the style of their writings is still more elaborate and correct. The persons who, by their birth and offices, are attached to the court, retain the ancient dignity and elegance of speech; and, above all, the women of quality, who, wholly excluded from all intercourse with strangers, preserved, without alloy, the genuine and pure idiom of their fathers."

There may be some exaggeration in this statement of the Italian writer; but it is remarkable, that Cicero, in speaking of the women of rank in the polished days of the Roman Commonwealth, praises the purity of their language, which was not tainted by any vicious novelty, and accounts for it almost in the same words. "Women," he observes, "more easily retain the genuine graces of language, because, unused to a variety of sounds, they quit not those which they first acquired. When I hear the ancient Lælia speak, I seem to listen to the accents of Plautus or Nævius: so chaste, so simple are the tones of her voice, free from affectation, and even from imitation. Thus, I say, her father spoke, and her more ancient progenitors." In another work, he mentions, with the same applause, the names of other illustrious Roman ladies*.

* De Orat. III. 45. De Claris Orat. 211.

Among the Greeks, besides a numerous and opulent clergy, neither the monks in their retirement, nor the princes on the throne with their ministers, had ceased to cultivate letters; and the schools of philosophy and eloquence continued to be frequented. These were fortunate circumstances: but it was still more fortunate, that Greece, with her schools, and libraries, and treasures of living learning, was not overwhelmed by the Turkish arms, till all the realms of Europe were prepared to afford them an asylum, and to profit by the circumstances which occasioned their dispersion.

APPENDIX.

N°. II.

ON THE ARABIAN OR SARACENIC LEARNING.

GENERAL VIEW—THE SARACENS ESTABLISH THEMSELVES IN AFRICA AND SPAIN—THEY ENCOURAGE LETTERS—THEIR GRAMMAR—ELOQUENCE—POETRY—PHILOLOGY—LEXICOGRAPHERS—PHILOSOPHY—ETHICS AND ASCETICISM—MEDICINE—NATURAL HISTORY—MATHEMATICS—GEOGRAPHY—HISTORY—THE FALL OF GRANADA, THE LAST MOORISH SETTLEMENT—AND OF THE CALIPHATE—THE THREE ARABIAN HISTORIANS—CONCLUSION.

APP. II. AS the sketch, which I shall now attempt to give of Arabian literature, is, in its commencement, contemporary with the most forlorn æra of which I have treated in the preceding work, particularly under the Lombard government, in Italy, I must request, that the reader will kindly look back to that portion of my history.

When we consider the desolating policy which inspired the plans of the followers of Mahomet, and the fanaticism by which they were achieved, the last wonder to be expected was, the cultivation of learning and the gentle arts of peace.

One hundred years after the flight of the prophet from Mecca to Medina, which was in 622, and is the first year of the Hegira, the arms and dominions of his successors extended from India to the Atlantic Ocean, over the various and distant provinces, which may be comprised under the general names of Persia, Syria, Egypt, Africa, and Spain.

A general View.

In the earliest accounts of the Arabias, the native inhabitants are said to have possessed a taste for letters, considered as restricted principally to eloquence and poetry; and great praise is bestowed upon the force and the harmony of their language: but when we are told, that they had fourscore words to signify *honey*, two hundred a *serpent*, five hundred a *lion*, a thousand a *sword*, and to illustrate each of which whole treatises were compiled, I must be allowed to withhold my assent from the philological prodigy. When a language is perplexed by synonymous words, these are known to have arisen from an intercourse with other nations, caused by conquest or by commerce; but it is said that the Arabians were never subjugated, and they lived in a state of independent seclusion. Whence then could so stupendous a multiplication of superfluous words have proceeded; and at a time when their compositions were committed to the repository of memory, rather than of books.

Their poets, as was primarily the case among all nations, were their historians, whose verses recorded the distinction of descents, of which the Arabians were proud, the rights of families, and the memory of great exploits. But even in poetry the freeborn spirit of the Arabians would not be shackled by many rules; and their eloquence has been

APP. II.

compared to loose gems, brilliant, but not improved by artificial combination; or, less elegantly, to "sand without lime." It was not by a discourse methodically arranged, as among the Greeks and Romans, but by the fulness of insulated periods, the harmony of expression, and the acuteness of proverbial sayings, that the Arabian orator aimed to rouse his hearers*.

Though educated in the purest dialect of the Arabian language, Mahomet is said to have been illiterate, and not even to have been able to read. "As to acquired learning," observes Sale, "it is confessed, that he had none at all, having had no other education than what was customary in his tribe, who neglected, and perhaps despised, what we call literature; esteeming no language in comparison with their own, their skill in which they gained by use and not by books, and contenting themselves with improving their private experience by committing to memory such passages of their poets as they judged might be of use to them in life." From Mahomet, therefore, learning, even in its lowest branches, could look for no encouragement; and when we follow him and his immediate successors through the progress of their mighty achievements, we tremble, lest—the monuments of past ages perishing in the general wreck of nations—the rhapsodies of the Koran should alone survive. "As to the books, of which you have made mention;" replied Omar, the second caliph, when consulted by his general Amrou about the Alexandrian

* Sale's Preliminary Discourse to his Translation of the Koran.

library, "if there be in them what accords with the book of God, (meaning the Koran), there is without them all that is sufficient: if there be any thing in them repugnant to that book, we in no respect want them. Command them to be all destroyed.*" This fact, which is not recorded by the historians nearest to the times, may not be untrue; but it is not less certain, that the triumph of their faith by arms, rather than the preservation or the dissemination of liberal knowledge, was the object of Moslem ambition.

The Arabians began ill; but they began as other nations had done: for it is only when success has ensured security, and empire is established, that the mind begins to think of letters, in the serenity of repose, and to seek for satisfaction and for fame in other occupations, than of those of arms. It may be said, that the Arabian character had been suspended: that it returned to its native habits, when time and prosperity chilled the ardour or relaxed the energies of fanaticism; and bigotry gave way to the suggestions of a laudable curiosity.

Under the reign of the caliphs of the house of the Ommyiah, who, during ninety years, resided at Damascus, the studies of the Moslems were confined to the interpretation of the Koran, and to the eloquence and poetry of their native tongue, which was generally diffused through the vast extent of all their conquests. Indeed, the Caliph Walid I. prohibited

* Abulpharagius Dynast. p. 114. Oxon. 1663. I shall speak of him hereafter.

APP. II.

the use of the Greek language, and ordered the Arabic to be substitued in its place. But, on the accession of the Abbassides to the caliphate in 750, Almanzor, the second of the dynasty, removed the seat of empire to Bagdad, the foundations of which he laid on the banks of the Tigris, where it soon became the most splendid city of the East. The simplicity of the first caliphs was now succeeded by the magnificence of the Persian court; and Almanzor, who had personally cultivated science, professed himself the lover of letters and of learned men. He offered rewards to such as should produce translations of Greek authors on the subjects which were most adapted to the taste of his countrymen—philosophy, astronomy, mathematics, and medicine—by which means he hoped to enrich his native literature, and to excite the attention of his subjects to higher attainments. The successors of Almanzor pursued the same track. Their ambassadors at Constantinople, and their agents in other parts, collected the volumes of Grecian learning, which were translated by the most skilful interpreters. Men of genius were exhorted to pursue them with assiduity; and the vicars themselves of the prophet were sometimes seen to assist with pleasure at the conversations of the learned. Then it was, in the lofty language of Eastern eloquence, that men of science were denominated "luminaries that dispel darkness; lords of human kind; of whom, when the world becomes destitute, it again sinks into barbarism *."

* Abulphar. Dynast. p. 160.

When the son of Mesuach, a young Nestorian christian, retiring from his own country, first entered Bagdad, it is related * that he appeared to have discovered a new world. He saw that the followers of Christ and of Mahomet, were there engaged in the pursuit of the liberal arts. Here then he remained, applying himself to medicine, philosophy, and astronomy. His acquirements became great, and his knowledge of languages extensive; whence, himself being a treasure of learning, he was chosen to attend on prince Almamon, the son of the caliph Heron-al-Raschid, and to accompany him on an important embassy. But the great deference which was shewn to him displeased the caliph. "Why have you this christian," he said to his son, "so constantly about your person?" —"I keep him as an artist," replied Almamon, "and not as the director of my conscience; and your highness is aware, how much the Jews and Christians are necessarily employed in your states."—Another instructor of Almamon was the Persian Kessai, who, one day, calling on the prince, when he was at table with his friends, was not admitted, but received from him the following lines: "There is a season for study, and a season for amusement: the present hour belongs to friendship, and the joys of the table."—Kessai on the back of the same leaf wrote "Were you well apprised of the excellence of learning, you would prefer the pleasure which it can give, to what you now enjoy; and did you know, who waits at your door, you would rise, and coming, on your knees thank heaven, for the

* Leo Afric. de viris Illust. ap. Arab. Bib. G. l. vi. c. 9. t. xiii.

APP. II. favour which it shews you." The prince rose, and attended on his master*.

On the accession of Almamon to the caliphate in 813, anxious as he was himself to acquire knowledge, and to instil the same desire into the public mind, he invited learned men from all nations to his court, whatever might be their religion; and collecting from them the names of the most celebrated authors, and the titles of the works which they had published in the Greek, the Syriac, and Persian languages, he directed journeys to be undertaken, and volumes to be purchased. The number of these, says the historian, was immense. The next point was, to select what was deemed most valuable under each head of science, and to proceed to the business of translation. The son of Mesuach presided over this important work, when, it is said, that among many others, the volumes of Galen on Medicine, and all the treatises of Aristotle, were translated into Arabic. Thus enriched, as it seemed to them, with the best stores of Grecian learning, they committed the residue to the flames, as useless, or perhaps as dangerous to the Moslem faith. Indeed, as the austere Cato once feared the contagion of Grecian eloquence, the sages of the law looked with jealousy upon the introduction amongst them of philosophy and other speculative studies, to which their caliph was peculiarly addicted. And his friendship for Mesuach also gave offence to them when he observed: "Surely, as I entrust to him the care of my body, wherein

* D'Herbelot Bib. Orient. art. Kessai.

dwells the immortal part of me, I may well commit to him the superintendence over words and writings, in many of which neither his faith nor mine has any concern." It was in the capacity of physicians that many Christians continued to be employed in the court of Bagdad.

Almamon reigned twenty years. He was the greatest prince of a dynasty, which was celebrated for great men, and is represented to us as possessing, besides the virtues of a king and the talents of a warrior, the more pleasing endowments of generosity and gentleness, which were embellished by literary taste. When, in terms highly courteous and flattering, he applied to the court of Byzantium, saying, that could the cares of government have allowed it, he would have waited in person on the emperor—he received the rude answer: "That the sciences, which had reflected glory on the Roman name, should not be communicated to barbarians."

But the splendour of the caliphate soon began to decline; and it is related *, that Radhi, who reigned early in the tenth century, was "the last, who harangued the people from the pulpit; who passed the cheerful hours of leisure with men of learning and taste: whose expenses, revenues, and treasures, whose table or magnificence had any resemblance to those of the ancient caliphs." But the unwieldy weight and cumbrous magnitude of the empire were the principal causes of its ruin.

* Abulfeda Annal. Moslem. p. 261.

APP. II.

Extensive powers were necessarily delegated to the distant emirs or governors; and when they had armies and treasures at their command, these soon became the instruments of ambition. We then behold the rise of independent monarchies. But if by these revolts the caliphate was divided, and weakened by division, it is probable, that ruin was by this means averted from the remaining kingdoms of the Christian world, which seemed to be threatened by the union of such a mighty power.

While the Arabian mind, by the means which I have mentioned, and principally through the course of the ninth century, was expanded, and enriched by the treasures of Greece—the reader will recollect what was the state of things in the West; when Charlemagne was dead, and all the hopes, which his labours had excited, of the return of better days, were extinguished.

The various revolts, which dismembered the Moslem empire, form the principal subject of the annals of the Saracens: but I shall notice, as connected with letters, those only of Africa and Spain.

The Saracens establish themselves in Africa and Spain.

By Amrou, the general of Omar, Egypt had been completely subdued in 641; and, within a few years, was begun the conquest of Africa, from the Nile to the Atlantic ocean. The usual tide of success attended the arms of Abdallah, and, after the establishment of the house of Ommiyah, Akbah, the general of the Caliph Moawiyah, we are told, pursued his career of victory till it was checked by the waves of the boundless ocean. Before the close of the century the con-

quest of Africa was complete; when Spain was invaded from its shores; and, about the year 713, reduced to a Moslem province. APP. II.

This province, however, was the theatre of the first successful revolt against the caliphs.—In the proscription of the Ommiades, about the year 750, a royal youth of the name of Abdalrahman alone escaped. He wandered from the banks of the Euphrates to the vallies of Mount Atlas; was invited into Spain by the friends to the fallen family; landed on the coast of Andalusia; and, after a successful struggle, established the throne of Cordova, in the year 755.

The example of Spain seems to have encouraged many similar acts of rebellion. In 812 the great revolution commenced in Africa, which finally terminated in the establishment of two independent sovereignties in the Fatimite dynasty, the seats of which were at Cairo in Egypt, and at Fez on the shores of the Western Ocean.

They encourage Letters.

We have seen the encouragement which was given to letters by Almamon at Bagdad, which was sometimes imitated by his successors of the same line, and extended to many other cities. The same conduct calls for our admiration in their rivals, the Fatimites of Africa, and the Ommiades of Spain. They became the patrons of learning; and their example, communicating a general spirit of emulation, diffused a taste for letters; whilst rewards and stipends allured the learned to their courts, and operated as a powerful stimulus to intellectual exertion. If Bagdad could boast of

APP. II. its richly endowed college, in which instruction was freely communicated, and of its profusion of volumes, collected from every region by the curiosity of the studious and the vanity of the rich, the same splendid distinction was possessed by Cairo and Cordova. The royal library of the Fatimites is said to have consisted of one hundred thousand manuscripts; and the collection of Spain was far more abundant. Cordova, with the adjacent towns of Malaga, Almeria, and Murcia, gave birth to many writers; and it is related that above seventy public libraries were opened in the cities of Andalusia*.——But it is now proper to be more particular.

I have before me an interesting work on the literature of the Saracens, during the most splendid æra of their government; and though its contents, under many heads, may principally regard Spain, they will be found adequately to represent the general standard of learning, in its full extent and character, whether at Cordova or Fez, at Cairo or at Bagdad†. In these seats of empire, though so widely separated,

* I have copied this short statement from Mr. Gibbon, vol. v. having previously consulted the authorities, which he quotes: Bib. Arab. Hisp. Leo Afric. d'Herbelot, Bib. Orient.

† Referring to this work (vol. v. p. 381), Mr. Gibbon says, "I am happy to possess a splendid and interesting work, which has been distributed only in presents by the court of Madrid: *Bibliotheca Arabico-Hispana Escurialensis, opera et studio Michaelis Casiri, Syro-Maronita, Matriti in Folio, Tomus prior*, 1760. *Tomus posterior*, 1770. The execution of this work does honour to the

the same language was spoken; and the same taste seemed to prevail. It is, indeed, proper to add, that the works to which I now allude, and on the style and contents of which our judgment must be formed, are many of them not the peculiar offspring of the Spanish school. Let me, however, profess my ignorance of the oriental tongues, and my gratitude, therefore, to the learned interpreters, who have transfused their spirit into the languages most common in Europe. And if, when these versions are said to be most faithful, we feel not that glow of admiration, which is expressed by the adepts in the original idioms, the cause may be principally ascribed to the diversity of eastern manners, and to the extravagance of eastern imagery. If the more temperate climate of Spain have rendered this less glaring, and intercourse with its christian natives have effected other changes, still while the language remained unaltered, the primitive models must have left a permanent impression.

It must, at the same time, be admitted, that the Arabian volumes possess much which, to our apprehension, could only have a local value and a temporary interest. But on many of our own productions, they, surely, would be authorised to

Spanish press: the MSS. to the number of 1851, are judiciously classed by the editor, and his copious extracts throw some light on the Mahometan literature and history of Spain. These relics are now secure; but the task had been supinely delayed, till, in the year 1671, a fire consumed the greatest part of the Escurial library, rich in the spoils of Grenada and Morocco." A copy of this work, kindly entrusted to me by the Earl of Malmesbury, to whom it was presented by his Catholic majesty, is now in my possession.

APP. II.

pass the same judgment. And while we freely censure their partial histories, their codes and commentaries on the law of their prophet, their endless interpretations of the koran, and the whole mass of polemics, mystics, scholastics, and moralists; we should not refuse the same liberty to an Arabian critic, who, admitted to turn over the volumes which crowd our libraries would soon discover ample grounds for just recrimination. Two things are remarkable: that they should have written so much, and that so much should have been preserved; when we consider that equal exertions were not made in Greece or Rome, in any former period; and that such shameful negligence, as I have often lamented, disgraced the conduct of their descendants. But if the Arabians wrote much, it follows, that they also read, or, in other words, that they were a literary people.

Their Grammar.

Before the times of Mahomet the Arabians or Saracens—for the words with us are synonymous, whatever may have been the origin of the latter—possessing a natural flow of eloquence, were little acquainted with the rules of grammar. But, in an early period of their conquests, an apprehension having arisen, that a commixture of so many nations would vitiate the purity of their tongue, it became an object of solicitude to prevent this effect: and for this purpose learned men were directed to institute rules; and academies were founded with the same view. The names of not less than thirty early grammarians are extant, among whom great difference of opinion prevailed; and commentaries, in many volumes, and of an endless prolixity, continued to be published. Among these commentators not a few were Spaniards—Grammar even to an Arabian mind could afford sub-

jects for poetical composition; and Ebn* Malek, a native of Spain, celebrated for his universal knowledge, and who lived in the thirteenth century, has left behind him more than forty works on language, of which five are called poetical. When I speak of language, I must be understood to mean that of Arabia; for the Saracens, proud in the riches of their native speech, disdained the study of any foreign tongue, and were satisfied, that translation should open the treasures of Greece to their inspection.

The two hundred and one works on grammar, which the Escurial library alone has preserved, sufficiently attest the scrupulous care with which the purity of the Arabic language was protected; its rules of pronunciation and syntax explained; its elegancies marked, and its obscurities elucidated. Even the accuracy and elegance of transcription which is visible in many copies, so late as the sixteenth century of our æra, must be viewed, as a continued proof of sedulous industry. Works of real philological science proceeded from all the schools of the Arabian professors, and men of talents employed themselves in unravelling the intricacies of grammar: while no standard of language could be found in Christian Europe, while Latin was become obsolete, or served only to supply the materials out of which, by a slow process, the dialects of modern Europe were to be formed; and while he who could barely read, was deemed a man of erudition. "Then such," exclaims our oriental linguist,

* Ebn signifies *son*, as Abou signifies *father*, and both enter into the composition of Arabian names.

APP. II. " was Arabia, the nurse of letters, when even Greece grew languid, the mistress of Asia, of Africa, and of Europe. Her natives turned their minds with so much ardour to the cultivation of science, that, though it may almost be said that the world submitted to their arms, it remains a doubt, whether their greatest renown be due to the splendour of these achievements, or to the tranquil cultivation of literature*."

Eloquence. It has been observed, that the ancient Arabians, though naturally eloquent, were lax and desultory in their addresses, of which many passages in the Koran are a proof; and when more matured reflection had corrected the exuberance of fancy, this consideration impelled them to recur to the chastened models of Grecian eloquence. These were translated, and their principles adapted to the genius of the Asiatic tongue. From this time, they could boast of their rhetoricians, of whom it is boldly asserted, that they might be compared with Quintilian in perspicuity and truth of precept; whilst they could vie with Cicero in beauty and in copiousness. Among the first was Ebn Alsekaki, a Persian, whose celebrated work is entitled *The Key of Sciences*, on which many commentaries have been written, and which, in the tumid language of its admirers, has been called " a boundless ocean, flowing with every thing precious." Let no one observes Alsekaki in his general precepts, pretend to excellence in writing, whose mind has not been well-seasoned in the school of all the liberal arts. In his *Universal Method*, Algezeri,

* Bibliotheca Arabico-Hispana, t. i. p. 1—46.

another rhetorician, states the several kinds of knowledge with which the orator should be furnished. He should possess, he says, the rules of grammar; be skilled in the accuracies of his tongue; have present to his mind the proverbial sayings of his countrymen; be versed in the select writings of the poets; have a knowledge of the laws and of the Koran, with a promptitude in applying them; and be conversant in the history of past events, particularly those in which the Moslems bore a part. In a third work on the same subject of oratory, the author, Alsiuthi, having spoken of the purity, the elegance, the force of the Arabian tongue, as an exemplification of his rules, adduces passages from the most approved writers, with their testimonies in support of his doctrine.

Whilst the too luxuriant effusions of their minds were restrained by compliance with these canons of discipline, we cannot doubt that the Arabs would attain the elevation of perfect eloquence. In the eleventh century, Athariri is extolled as a consummate orator. But, though the translations could not be deemed an accurate test, we cannot but regret, that, from the sixty-eight works which fill this department, some extracts have not been exhibited, as samples of genuine Arabian eloquence when chastised by rule*.

Besides the seven celebrated poets, who wrote before the age of Mahomet, and whose works on various subjects, all of

Poetry.

* Bib. Arab. Hisp. t. i. p. 47—62.

APP. II.

which have not much connexion with poetry, are highly esteemed by the Arabians *, the detailed catalogue of their successors in the same walk may be deemed endless. Not less than two hundred and twenty copies of their works are contained in the Escurial library, many of which are by Spanish authors. Indeed, so addicted were the Arabians to poetry, and so flexible was their language, that not only the jejune rules of grammar, but philosophical and mathematical questions, jurisprudence and theology, and commentaries or scholia on these and every other subject, were treated by them in poetical measure. Much has been written on the variety of this measure; which from the earliest times was rendered diversified and intricate, in elegies, epigrams, odes, and satires. But the praises of their heroes, particularly of Mahomet, the descriptions of beautiful scenery, the events of war, the vicissitudes of fortune, the charms of virtue, the deformities of vice, the passion of love in all its modes and influences, together with apologues or moral tales, in an unbounded variety, are those themes which appear most congenial with the taste of the Arabic Muse.

That portion of Arabia, called Yemen, or the *Happy*, from the delightfulness of its climate and the simple manners of its people, is the only country, it has been observed †, in which the scene of pastoral poetry can properly be laid. Placed under a serene sky, and exposed to the most

* They are translated by Sir William Jones: vol. IV. of his works.

† I copy Sir William Jones; Essay on Asiatic Poetry, vol. IV. p. 527.

favourable influence of the sun, Yemen takes its name from a word which signifies *verdure* or *felicity;* for in those climates, freshness of the shade and coolness of water, excite ideas which are almost inseparable from those of happiness. Poetry, besides, derives its principal ornaments from the beauty of natural images; whence the odours of Yemen, the musk of Hadramut, and the pearls of Omman, supply a variety of allusions to the Arabian poets. And if the remark be just, "that whatever is delightful to the senses produces the beautiful when described," what may not be expected from eastern poems, which turn so much on the loveliest objects of nature? Beautiful expressions are obviously suggested by beautiful images. But Arabian poetry does not delight in these alone. The gloomy and terrible objects, which when described, produce the *sublime*, are no where more common than in the *desert* and *stony* Arabias; and nothing is more frequently painted by their poets, than beasts of prey, precipices and forests, rocks and wildernesses.

When natural objects are sublime and beautiful, observes the same able judge *, such will be introduced as comparisons, and metaphors, and allegories; for an allegory is a string of metaphors, a metaphor is a short simile, and the finest similes are drawn from nature. The *dew of liberality* and the *odour of reputation* are metaphors very generally used; but they are peculiarly proper in the mouths of those who have so much need of being refreshed by the *dews*, and who gratify the sense

* I copy Sir William Jones; Essay on Asiatic Poetry, vol. iv. p. 527.

APP. II. of smelling by the sweetest *odours*. When many of the eastern figures are examined by these allusions, they seem to possess a grace, to which, in our northern climates, they have no claim.

The Arabians of the plains, like the old Nomades, dwelt in tents, and removed from place to place, according to the season, watching their flocks and camels, repeating their native songs, and passing their lives in the highest pleasures, of which they had any conception, surrounded by the most delightful objects, and in the enjoyment of perpetual spring. And if the genius of every nation is affected by its climate, that of the East must abound in liveliness of fancy, and in richness of invention. Admirers also of beauty in the human figure, the Arabians were peculiarly susceptible of that passion, which has been aptly termed the genuine source of agreeable poetry. Love has, certainly, the greatest share in all their poems; and there is hardly an elegy, a panegyric, or even a satire, which does not open with the complaints of an unfortunate, or the raptures of a successful lover. The description then follows of the horse or camel, on which he is to be carried to the tent of the beloved object *.

With this turn for poetry, the Arabians had the advantage of a rich and beautiful language, expressive, forcible, sonorous, and perhaps the most copious in the world. From the familiarity of this people with the most enchanting objects,

* See the seven ancient poems translated by Sir Wm. Jones, vol. IV.

from leading a calm and tranquil life in a fine climate, addicted to the softer passions, and possessed of such a language as has been described, they could be deficient in no ingredient which was requisite to give a vigorous impulse to poetical composition, provided their manners and customs were, at the same time, favourable to the cultivation of the art. This was the case in a high degree.

In the days of chivalry, it is probable, that we learned from the Arabians, to honour our poets and minstrels: but we did not rise to the enthusiasm of our masters. Among them, when a poet made his first appearance, his tribe was saluted with the warmest gratulations. Happy, exclaimed the exulting multitude, were they, who now possessed a hero, who would guard their honour, and a herald who would perpetuate the fame of their achievements. It was on this occasion, and when the birth of a son, or the foaling of a colt of generous descent, was announced, that such gratulations were principally expressed. To keep alive an emulation among the poets, the tribes are said, once a year, to have held a general assembly, before which they recited their compositions, sure of receiving every merited applause. Even the most admired of these compositions were transcribed on Egyptian silk in letters of gold, as were the seven celebrated poems already mentioned, and deposited in the public treasury, or suspended on the sides of the sacred Caaba at Mecca *. But Mahomet, intent on higher objects, suppressed this assembly; when the

* Sale's Prelim. Disc. p. 36.

APP. II. pursuits of poetry were checked, and, by the interruption, many of the ancient poems, which were chiefly preserved by memory, were lost. These days of barbarism soon passed away, and the courts of the Saracen princes were again opened to the bards whose songs were rewarded with a munificence truly royal.

With such stimulating patronage and inspiring honours, we cannot be surprised, that poetry should have advanced to high perfection among the Saracens. At the same time, none of the causes which, with us, had affected language, had begun to operate; and their's had retained its primitive purity with the nicest care. This was also aided by the contempt in which they held the speech of other nations, though they could value the contents of their works. But our ablest linguists lament, that no version can transfuse the elegant sweetness of the Arabian bards. This is an evil which cannot be avoided, even where many more steps of approximation, in verbal idiom, in national manners, and in natural objects, exist, than between Europe and Asia.

The hatred of idolatry was so deeply fixed in the mind of the Arabians, that if they could have received pleasure from the more sober elegancies of the Grecian school, they would not have been induced to read their poets, or to have permitted them to be translated. They seem, therefore, to have been strangers to the mythology of the Greeks; but they had a mythology of their own, composed of an extensive range of spiritual beings, whose agency might well have been introduced into the epic drama, had they followed the rules of Aristotle, whose works they professed to admire; or could the poets of Greece

have captivated their attention. They were barely acquainted with the name of Homer; and not so much could, probably, be said of Virgil, nor of any of our Western poets. It has sometimes been made a charge against the Christians of Spain and Africa, that they withheld from the Moors, or did not themselves know the value of, the classical works of ancient Rome: but these were not esteemed even by the Greeks; and, besides, it is well known, that the cause which has been assigned, estranged the Arabian mind from the perusal of our poets.

The Arabians were also strangers to dramatic compositions, as adapted to the stage; and they seem not to have known the names of the tragic and comic writers of Greece. But they made up for this deficiency, by a species of writing, more fitted to the retired habits of their women, which consisted of tales in all the infinite ramifications of Asiatic invention. From this source Europe drew abundantly *.

As it would be little interesting, I have not specified the names, nor mentioned the contents and particular style of the works of the most celebrated poets, as they are found in the Escurial collection. What has been generally observed, may suffice; to which I will only add, that, whilst the delicacy of the Arabians, on certain points, in which their faith seemed concerned, has been extreme, and, it may be thought, in some

* For further information on the Asiatic poets, the reader may consult the works of Sir William Jones, and other modern publications.

APP. II.

degree, justly reproachful to our more pliant manners; their licentious and disgusting freedom, on other subjects, has passed all bounds. But this freedom has not escaped the severe censure of their rulers.

Philology.

Under the head of *Philology*, many miscellaneous subjects, serious and facetious, are introduced; and as the reader may be curious to see, in what manner the learned Spaniard proceeds in his laborious work, he may take the following specimen. "The first," says he, "of the seventy-six works on philology is a copy, for elegance and beauty of writing, inferior to none, decorated with golden lines and asterisks, and completed on the fourth day of the month Gemadi, of the Hegira 789, of Christ 1387, for the use of the king of Morocco. It contains a work highly valued by the Arabians, in prose and verse, entitled *Academic Harirean Orations*, from the name of the author Hariri, and which may be considered as a characteristic specimen of Arabian elegance and learning. The discourses are fifty, many of which pourtray the manners of the age, and are named from certain persons, or from the places in which they were delivered. Thus one is called *Alcailiat*, from an ancient Arabian prince Cail, who was styled the *Great* from his exploits; another *Alsananiat*, from Sanaa, the principal city of Arabia Felix. The author Alhariri, a native of Bassora, died in 1121, of the Hegira 515, so celebrated in all the academies, as to have commanded the praises of the most learned, and have induced them to write commentaries on his works. 'The *Orations* of Hariri,' observes Schirazi, 'should be inscribed on sheets of silk and gold, not on parchment or linen.' And thus he proceeds to add: 'His diction is graceful, elegant, and com-

pressed; his method and copious style exhibit the art of fine writing; and no one ever more vividly displayed the peculiar character and amenities of the Arabian language. In all his discourses, which are adorned with the flowers of rhetoric, are many examples, and these are set off by passages, sometimes calculated to draw tears by their plaintiveness, and at others to amuse by their gaiety."

The contents of another work by Ebn Arabscah of Damascus, in tales and fables, indicate the true Arabian origin: "The story of an Arabian king: admonitions of a king of Persia: the disputations of a man with the king of the genii: the sayings and actions of a goat: the judgment of a solitary lion: the opinions of a wandering camel: the story of the king of the birds, and many more such pieces, designed, by elegant and diverting discourses, to improve the mind and teach the art of government."

Asba Alazadita of Corduba, or Cordova, in the twelfth century, wrote *Descriptions of Things and their Properties*, styled the *Golden* Verses, in which, after having first accurately described whatever seemed to appertain to man, he goes on to describe the horse in all its parts, a favourite subject with the Arabians, and to state what his characteristic nature is, and what the qualities deserving of praise or censure. He then passes to the camel, and to other animals.

Another native of Corduba, but an inhabitant of Sicily, in the eleventh century, composed a work which is highly moral, and divided into sections—on the disposition of mind

APP. II.

with which the events of life are endured in submission to the will of heaven; on mental sorrow or penitence; on patience; on the conformity of our wills with that of God; and on the purity and discipline of life.

From the painted figures with which this work abounds, and the subjects which they represent, it should seem rather to have been the transcription of a Christian than of an Arabian copyist. The names of the transcribers are generally given, and the precise date of the MSS *.

But let me not forget to speak of the venerable Locman. He is said to have been an Ethiopian or Nubian, extremely deformed in his person, but so famed for wisdom, as to have acquired the appellation of *the sage*. It is agreed, that he lived in a period of remote antiquity; and, probably, during the reigns of the Jewish kings, David and Solomon. His fables and moral maxims, written for the instruction of mankind, were, in the estimation of the eastern people, a gift from heaven, and they received them as its inspired dictates. "Heretofore," says the divine being in the Koran, "we gave wisdom to Locman †." Were he and Æsop the same person? It is not improbable that Greece was indebted to the East for the fables which she claimed under the name of Æsop. That, at least, was the country of apologues, a species of writing peculiarly adapted to its genius. Besides, the history

* Bib. Arab. Hisp. t. 1. p. 142—165.

† C. 31.

of the two sages is so perfectly similar in their characters, and the incidents of their lives, that one must have been borrowed from the other; and, in this case, to doubt, is to be ignorant of the Grecian character. But there are chronological difficulties which are sufficiently perplexing *.

Lexicographers.

Another proof of the great attention with which the Arabian language was cultivated, may be drawn from the number of lexicons or dictionaries, designed to elucidate its obscurities, and fix the proper meaning of words. A work of this kind appeared in the early years of the Hegira, which was followed by many similar productions, so comprehensive and minute, as to have left nothing unexplored. Among the lexicographers, two are principally commended, Geuharis and Firuzabadi, the first of whom lived in the most flourishing æra of Arabian literature, the latter in its decline; whom the student should regard as polar stars, to guide him unerringly on his way. Firuzabadi, lived in the fifteenth century, the eighth of the Hegira; was greatly honoured by many princes, and, as a reward for his labours, is said to have received from the Tartar Tamerlane, five thousand pieces of gold. His work, as it was first projected, was intended to be comprised in sixty volumes, which he reduced to one. The number of MSS. on this head are forty-three †.

* Bib. Arab. Hisp. t. 1. p. 63—141. See also Bib. G. l. 11. c. 9. t. 1. D'Herbelot Bib. Orient. art. Locman.

† Bib. Arab. Hisp. t. 1. p. 166—177.

APP. II. Philosophy.

Notwithstanding the early fondness of the Arabs for such studies as were immediately connected with the improvement of their language, they did not apply themselves so soon to the pursuit of the higher sciences. They had long followed medicine; and they had made observations in astronomy; but they were strangers in the walks of philosophy; and it was the wish of the prophet, and of his immediate successors, that the Koran alone, rather than inquiries which might lead to its contempt, should engage the thoughts of the Moslem. Providence had other views; and as literature retired in disgust from the realms of Christendom, this very people were ready to embrace it with eagerness, and to cherish it with ardour in the court of Bagdad, and in many other cities of their empire.

In the court of Bagdad the voice of philosophy was first heard. The works of the Greek sages were translated, schools were opened, and science was pursued with such avidity, that, at one time, we read of a concourse of six thousand students. The same zeal was felt in Africa and in Spain; and we are furnished with magnificent descriptions of their colleges. But Aristotle was the master whom they principally, if not exclusively, followed; and on his text are founded the several systems of philosophy which sometimes united, but oftener divided, the Arabian schools.

Among the most celebrated philosophers, the first was Alkendi of Bagdad, who taught there in our ninth century, who was styled, in the language of the East, "the root of the age, the phœnix in the circle of sciences, and the philosopher of the Arabians," from whose pen proceeded treatises

on logic, geometry, arithmetic, music, and astronomy, with commentaries on the works of Aristotle, to whom he implicitly resigned his judgment on every question.

Alkendi was followed by Thabet Ebn Korra in the next century, who wrote on the same subjects, and on the books of Euclid, and who, like his predecessor, and many more of the Arabian sages, joined the profession of medicine to the study of philosophy.

In the tenth century also lived Alfarabi, who, having studied with uncommon success at Bagdad, where honours were held out to him, and his stay was pressed with the warmest solicitations, withdrew from the splendid scene, and in retirement, joining practice to theory, devoted himself to intellectual pursuits. In the days of her most rigid morality, Greece had seen nothing more severely moral than was the life of Alfarabi. "A barley-loaf," he used to say, "a spring of water, and a woollen cloak, are preferable to joys that end in penitence." In this retirement, he found a source of unfailing delight in the works of Aristotle, which he is said to have perused two hundred times, and for the instruction of his countrymen, to have made them the subject of sixty distinct treatises. The labour might be prodigal; but it evinces, what it is important to know, how strongly this species of Grecian science had captivated the Arabian mind. Alfarabi was likewise a musician, who composed, and accompanied his compositions on the lute. In the court of the Sultaun of Syria, while the singers were executing one of these pieces, and he was playing, the audience, by an irresistible impulse, burst into laughter. He changed the piece,

APP. II.

when every eye was filled with tears: but, at the third change, a sudden drowsiness seized the assembly, and the Sultaun nodded.

About the same period of time, Al-Asshari in order to explain the nature of the divine decrees and their influence on human actions, applied the subtle reasoning of the Peripatetics to the tenets of Islamism, and dividing its professors, established a theological sect which soon acquired almost an universal ascendency. His books, like the texts of truth, were read in the schools, and his axioms and verses were committed to memory.

Another great man, great both in philosophy and in the art of healing, was Al-Razis, a Persian, but who taught and practised at Bagdad, in the tenth century, who has been celebrated under the appellation of the Arabic Galen. He afterwards resided at the court of Corduba, where he died, leaving behind him works on a great variety of subjects: but it is said that he chiefly owed his fame to the Greeks, in whose writings he was well-versed.

Al-Razis was followed, in the same line, by his still more celebrated countryman Avicenna, whose ardour in every pursuit of philosophy, theology, and medicine, has been described by himself. He faithfully committed to memory the lessons of the Koran, and the metaphysical books of the Stagirite; and he mastered, without a guide, the theories of Euclid. "Afterwards," says he, "repeating my philosophical studies, when difficulties perplexed me, I repaired to the

temple, where, in suppliant prayer, I addressed my Maker, till light broke in upon my mind. At night before my lamp I desisted not: I overcame the importunities of sleep; and finally triumphed in the acquisition of almost every science."

Yet we might be permitted to doubt of his scientific acquisitions, if he placed much reliance on heavenly illumination; or the aid by natural dreams which he also mentions. It was, however a great misfortune, by which all the Arabian students suffered, that, themselves ignorant of the Greek tongue, they relied solely on translations, which, as it was afterwards discovered, were in general extremely defective. The work had often been committed to Asiatic Christians, ill-versed in the originals; and the first translation was not unfrequently in Syriac, from which it was rendered into Arabic*. The Arabian philosophers were often led astray by these unfaithful guides; yet they were enthusiastically devoted to their theories; and no one more than Avicenna. He is even accused, in all his works, whether medical or philosophical, of having stolen from the Greeks whatever was most valuable, and of having stolen without judgment.

Among the African or Moorish Moslems, in the twelfth century, we find Essachalli, a native of Sicily, a man of general science, but most celebrated for geographical pursuits.

* See Ep. Renaudot. ad Dacerium Bib. G. p. 861. t. 1.

APP. II.

On this subject he wrote a work of great extent, which particularly engaged the attention of the Norman Roger, Count of Sicily, who directed it to be translated into Latin, and who earnestly, but in vain, laboured to detain Essachalli near his person. In Spain were Avenzoar and Thophail, the first, by the rejection of useless theories, deemed the rational improver of Arabian medicine; the second, the author of some admired works, and the faithful follower of Aristotle; but both are not less known as the masters of the great Averroes.

Averroes was born at Corduba, in the twelfth century, where he studied; and he exercised the high dignity of judge and pontiff; but where, for having attempted to unite the doctrines of Aristotle with those of the Koran, and to explain one by the aid of the other, he was accused of heresy, deposed from his office, and subjected to a series of vexatious persecutions. He died at the court of Morocco, and was in part restored to the favour of his sovereign, early in the following century.

The virtues of Averroes were eminent, his administration wise, his application to philosophy indefatigable, and so laudable were the general habits of his life, that, in reading the anecdotes which are recorded of him, we seem to be carried back to the days of Socrates, and once more to contemplate the soul of the latter, by a happy metempsychosis, transfused into the body of the Arabian sage. On Aristotle he wrote commentaries so famous, as to have acquired for him, κατ' ἐξοχήν, the name of the *commentator*; and he expounded the *Republic*

of Plato, though Plato seemed less to attract the taste of his countrymen; and he undertook a general *Defence* of the cause of philosophy; though it has been observed, that he was himself imperfectly conversant with its genuine principles, as they had been delivered in the schools of Greece. The catalogue of his works, in their various branches, from the *art of reasoning* to that of *music*, is numerous. While Averroes was viewed by his contemporaries and by our schoolmen as a prodigy of science, more recent critics consider him as an infatuated admirer of Aristotle, whose works he did not understand.

Again, in the same twelfth century, but at an earlier period, flourished Gazzali, a native of Asia, and a man of uncommon acquirements, as a philosopher, a theologian, a jurist, and a poet. He appeared at Bagdad about the time when the *great college* was finished, on which vast sums had been expended, and which was now richly endowed. Among the incredible concourse of learned men, assembled for the purpose of lecturing on every branch of science, Gazzali was without a rival. He was honoured by the caliph, courted by the magistrates, whilst his lectures were attended by all ranks of citizens. Many years passed in this manner, when he resigned the seat of honour; and having distributed his wealth among the indigent, and put on the habit of a pilgrim, he visited Mecca, Cairo, and Alexandria; and, finally, returned to Bagdad, where he died in the year 1111. The works of Gazzali are very numerous, among which are many poetical compositions on amatory and moral subjects. The historian*

* Leo Afric. in Bib. G. t. XIII. See also Bib. Orient.

APP. II. observes, that the latter are most esteemed, many of which he could himself repeat, but which though most elegant in their native language, could not easily be translated into Latin.

Though the names of more than ninety other philosophers with an account of their works, lie before me, it may be sufficient to have selected these few, which will clearly shew the scientific zeal of the Arabians, and the general character of their studies after they had become acquainted with the philosophy of Greece. But though their intellectual faculties were thus exercised, no light was thrown upon those topics which were most in need of elucidation. The absurdities of Islamism retained their authority; and the subtle reasonings of the Peripatetic school, which were themselves perverted by endless commentaries, were enlisted into its service.

The philosophy of Greece, as it was cultivated by the Arabians, had lost much of its original purity, without acquiring any additional value. Satisfied with the exercise of their mental powers in the discussion of abstruse inquiries, they did not look into themselves for the evidence of first principles in logic or in metaphysics, and treating of natural effects, they did not consult nature herself and the experience of daily observation. But utterly deserted as philosophy now was by the Latins, and little cultivated as it was by the Greeks, her reception by the Arabians was highly fortunate. For with them she was respected, cherished, caressed, till the Western world shook off its debasing apathy, and invited her return. When she did return, she was loaded with the cumbrous garb which had been thrown over her by the united labours of Grecian, Syrian, and Arabian commentators; nor can we be surprised

that when appearing in this form, she should have given rise to the *scholasticism* of our middle ages. This scholasticism was the genuine philosophy of the Arabian schools, in the common questions of human research; and accommodated in those of theology to the specific objects of the Christian code*.—Surprised we must be, observes Denina †, when we learn that our ancestors derived from those very Mahometans, whom they perpetually reviled, the greater part of the doctrine, which during many ages, was taught in the Christian schools. Such was the doctrine on the Divine Being and his attributes, grace and free will, human actions, virtue and vice, eternal punishment, and heaven. Even the very titles of the works of the Arabians and the schoolmen on these subjects, are so similar, as to induce a suspicion that the one must have been copied from the other.

Ethics and Asceticism.

Connected with the philosophy of the Arabians were their views of morals, as likewise the exercises of that abstracted piety which is known under the name of Asceticism. The subjects are here treated in not less than seventy-nine volumes. Their ethical writings abound with excellent precepts, such as that in the eleventh century by Ebn Abilnur, a Spaniard, which treats of the duties of princes, shewing what should be

* Bib. Arab. Hisp. t. I. p. 178—207.—On this subject I have also consulted the learned Brucker, t. III. p. 1.—157. and Leo Africanus de Viris Illust. ap. Arabes in Bib. G. t. XIII.

† Vicende della Lett. l. x. c. 47.

APP. II. the rule of their administration, what the virtues which they should practise, and what the amusements, which may be permitted as a relaxation from the severe offices of their state. It recommends attention to agriculture, to the arts, and to military discipline. It then describes the danger which menaced the Spanish monarchy from a neglect of these points, when no regard was paid to probity and learning; when the provinces were governed by incapable and mercenary agents; the fields were uncultivated, and the arts despised; the soldiers enervated, and their arms covered with rust; and where the enemy threatened, universal consternation prevailed. The work, besides, is enlivened by anecdotes and abundant documents drawn from Greek and Arabian authors.

The works on general morality, containing exhortations to virtue, the beauty of which is often delineated with the glow of oriental colouring, and dissuasives from vice, of which the features are not less forcibly portrayed, abound with apophthegms, parables, or stories aptly introduced and elegantly told, by which instruction is instilled, the attention kept alive, and the mind amused.—This method was adopted in their public addresses or sermons to the people. The preacher, having returned thanks to heaven, and made a profession of his belief, prayed for the safety of the reigning prince, and the welfare of his realm. He then addressed the meeting, begging that, with a docile heart, they would give ear to the word of God. The subject was next proposed and enforced by texts from the Koran and the authorities of sages; after which the orator inveighed severely against vice, and exhorted his audience to the practice of virtue.

On the ascetic, that is, the contemplative or monastic life,

the Arabian works are numerous. Monasteries were early established among the followers of Mahomet; and the duties of retirement are often described. Hence their mystic theology seems to have had its rise. The Spaniard Altai wrote many treatises on this subject, in which he speaks of the happiness of solitary abstraction, of the daily conferences which the brotherhood were to hold respecting their progress in virtue and the chastisements of sin, to which he adds counsels and remedies fitted to promote the acquisition of higher purity.—Another author treats of a soul given up to contemplation, and of the annihilation and repose of all its faculties, on attaining which, he says, that the individual is admitted to the participation of the sublimest gifts and the revelation of heavenly mysteries.—In a third work on the method of contemplation, entitled the *Book of Revelations*, the abstraction of the mind from the body and all terrene objects is mentioned, a state to which it is observed, that many monks arrived, and in which, by a total alienation from earth, they remained dead to the impressions of sense*. APP. II.

But I am insensibly drawn from the object of this inquiry; for however elegantly these things may be treated in the pliant versatility of the Arabic tongue, they have no connexion with literature.

I have already spoken of *medicine*, as combined, in many eminent Arabians, with the study of philosophy: but the Medicine.

* Bib. Arab. Hisp. t. 1. p. 208—233.

APP. II. subject demands some further consideration. The art of healing, in its simplest form, must have been coeval with the existence of man; but as maladies, from change of climate, from intemperance, and from other causes, increased, it became more complicated, and required more study. The high antiquity of their origin may incline us to believe, that the Arabians, the Egyptians, and other natives of the Asiatic regions, were, from the earliest times, addicted to the practice of medicine; but accounts shew that, as late as Mahomet, little encouragement was given, at least to strangers, and that the general temperance, which prevailed among his followers, afforded few occasions for the exercise of medical skill. But no sooner had the love of Grecian science seized the Arabian mind, than it was directed with ardour to the medical writers of that country. Some of these with their philosophers, were translated during the auspicious caliphate of Almamon; and the same important work was continued by a succession of other translators, among whom Honain Ebn Isac occupied a conspicuous place.

Honain, who was a christian and a physician, flourished at Bagdad, about the middle of the ninth century; some years later than the son of Mesuach, of whom I spoke, and of whom he is said to have been the pupil. To perfect himself in the knowledge of the Greek language, he had travelled into that country, where he had conversed with the learned, and read the works of their celebrated writers. Thence he proceeded to Basora, which was distinguished by the purity of its Arabic dialect; and, on his return to Bagdad, was invited by the reigning caliph to undertake, as his master had done, the translation of Greek authors, and, like him, to superintend the

work of other labourers in the same line. He himself relates with what caution he executed his own task: that, in the text, he made no alterations, but after the most mature reflection; and that, in obscure and ambiguous passages, he consulted various copies, and conferred with learned men. Skilled as he was in the powers of both languages, and advancing with such deliberate care, Honain must have discharged his office with fidelity; and, had his example been followed, I do not see with what justness the Arabic versions can be generally censured as barbarous and inaccurate. It seems, however, that the translations which were made by Honain or his master, from the Greek sources, were comparatively few, and that Syriac was the most ordinary channel through which the versions were executed. This was the language principally understood by the christians employed about the court of Bagdad. Into this they translated, at the same time, often, as we may confidently affirm, without being themselves well skilled in the Greek originals. Hence the errors which they committed would not fail to be perpetuated, as they passed first into the Arabic, and then, with additional corruptions, into the early Latin versions of the christian schools*.

The work, by which Honain is best known as a translator, was *The Aphorisms of Hippocrates with the Commentaries of Galen;* but beside this and other valuable versions, he pro-

* Ep. Renandoti ad Dacerium, Bib. G. t. I. et de barbaricis Aristotelis versionibus, ibid. t. XII.

APP. II. duced many volumes of original composition, and principally on the art in which he excelled.

In perusing the list of more than a hundred volumes, I find the name of Ebn Albaithar, a Moorish Spaniard, who was renowned for his medical and botanical science, and the polished elegance of his style. His vast erudition was strengthened by an extensive practice, which had left nothing unexplored that nature presented, and his predecessors amongst the Greeks and Arabians, had investigated. In order to enlarge his botanical knowledge, he traversed many regions of the West of Africa and Asia. He was every-where honoured in his journey; and, when stationary, was not unfrequently invested with the highest dignities. Albaithar passed some years in the court of Saladin, the worthy antagonist of our Richard, after whose death, he returned into Spain, and died at Malaga about the year 1197. His principal work treats of the *Virtues of Plants*. He wrote also on *poisons*, on *metals*, and on *animals*.

Contemporary with Albaithar, as also with Averroes, was the Jew Maimonides, a native of Corduba. He had derived from the study of the ancients great stores of knowledge in the mathematics, medicine, and other arts; and he was reckoned profoundly learned in the peculiar tenets of his own faith. But, on one occasion, he renounced this faith through fear; and conformed to that of Mahomet. Soon afterwards he quitted Spain; and, retiring into Egypt, resumed his former creed, and published works on various subjects. Those on medicine, in particular, were much read. His brethren

of the Jewish persuasion looked up to him as a sage; and he was much esteemed by Averroes and other learned Moors *.

I will mention another Spanish Jew, Abraham Ibnu Sahal †, who is ranked among scientific men, but was more celebrated for his songs or lyric compositions. The sweetness of these caused them to be much admired; but the elders complained of their immoral tendency, and exerted themselves to check their circulation. Their exertions were in vain. "There is not a man," it was observed to the supreme judge, "nor a woman, nor a child, in the city of Corduba, who cannot repeat by heart these songs of Abraham Ibnu Sahal." "My single hand, then," he replied, "is not able to close the mouths of thousands;" but he predicted that ruin must soon fall on a people, whose attention could be engaged by such trifles, and whose manners were thus corrupted. In order to silence the tongue of the corrupter, recourse, it is said, was had to poison. Ibnu Sahal died in 1245.

Having spoken of the Jews, I will further observe of them, that, in these times of Saracenic splendour, they, equally with the Christians, recommended themselves to notice by the profession of menial arts, by their knowledge of languages acquired in travelling, and by their traffic in books. Their

* Leo Afric. de Medicis et Philos. Hebræis, Bib. G. t. XIII.

† Ibid.

APP. II. acquirements, except in the lucrative art of medicine, were generally slender; but as the Arabians, in the pride of superiority, disdained the drudgery of learning languages, even that very Greek to which they were so much indebted, recourse became necessary to foreign aid.

I quit this subject of medicine with some reluctance, as it abounds with many interesting anecdotes, and evinces the ardour of the Arabians in its pursuit. It also not only shews, what progress they had made, but indicates the prevailing maladies, and the medicines which were most generally prescribed. Nature seems to have been their principal guide, and they applied such helps as she offered from her vegetable stores*. This leads me to the next topic, which is immediately connected with the preceding.

Natural History. As Albiathar, treading in the steps of the Grecian Dioscorides, and supplying by his comments what the latter had omitted, or had not known, laid open to his countrymen the secret recesses of nature, in her metals, plants, and animals, as more directly subservient to the healing art which he professed, we might justly infer, without further inquiry, that what has been called the *History of Nature*, formed likewise a part of Arabic science. But this we learn from works written expressly on the subject. The richness and amenity of the productions of nature displayed in the various regions,

* Bib. Arab. Hisp. t. 1. p. 234—317.

which had been subjected by the Moslem arms, and were now occupied in tranquil possession, could not fail to allure the attention of every curious observer. Much fewer volumes, indeed, here present themselves (not more than ten); but these few are interesting and comprehensive. And it is not improbable, that the flames which, in 1671, consumed so considerable a portion of the Escurial collection, preyed on this department with more unsparing rage.

Algiaheth composed a book on animals, in which he drew some materials from Aristotle and the works of others; but, as late as the fourteenth century, Abilphath Ebn Alderaiham treated the subject more in detail, describing the natures, the dispositions, the properties of quadrupeds, birds, fish, and insects. I find also an elaborate treatise on *horses* (which is always a favourite subject with the Arabians), and another on *hawking* and *hunting*, which is replete with many curious inquiries. The authors of these works were Spaniards.

A work by Albiruni on *Gems* is much praised. He was a Persian in the eleventh century, and the author of many works of deep erudition. Dissatisfied with his domestic literature, he travelled for forty years into different countries, exploring the treasures of Greece and the more ancient monuments of Asia. He protracted his stay in India; and whilst he drew from the communications of its sages the maxims of their primitive discipline, he, in return, laid before them the philosophy of the Grecian schools. No one, says the historian of his life, at that time equalled him in science, particularly in the knowledge of the stars, and no one has since

APP. II. been his equal. In great and minute inquiries he was alike transcendent.

But a work of the greatest utility, and which is not less an object of curiosity, is a treatise on *Agriculture*, by the Spaniard Ebn Aluam. He lived in the thirteenth century, and is said to have been illustrious by his birth and by his learning. Few writers seem to have taken a more comprehensive view of the subject; and it is rendered more valuable by extracts from Oriental, Greek, African, Arabian, and Latin authors, whose observations on the culture of land, and on other analogous points, he endeavours to accommodate to the soil and climate of Spain. The work is divided into thirty-four chapters, in which, besides the agriculturist, the objects of whose attention are principally detailed, the horticulturist and the florist will find ample entertainment. Many parts of natural history are likewise curiously examined; and the whole will show the singular assiduity with which the Moorish Spaniards devoted themselves to agriculture, what progress they had made and what were the grains, the fruits, the flowers which were then generally grown. They are said to have naturalized in Spain the indigenous products of Africa, and of more eastern soils; but many of these are no longer to be found. They migrated with their masters, or rather, when no longer fostered by their patient vigilance and tender care, they languished and died away. The Arabian annals record astonishing instances of the fertility and population of the Spanish provinces; when the kings of Granada alone, for their own use and the purposes of war, could lead out a hundred thousand horse; and double that number of men

were sometimes marshalled in battle against their Christian foes*. APP. II.

Some part, and before this time, probably, the whole of the above treatise has been translated into Spanish, by the librarian of the Escurial †.

Though the genius of the Arabians accommodated its powers with wonderful pliability to every scientific pursuit, it was in the more abstruse researches, as the character of its philosophy has already evinced, in which it seemed principally to delight. We have seventy-eight volumes on *Mathematical* subjects. Mathematics.

Albategni was celebrated for his astronomical science, as were many others; and in geometry, arithmetic, algebraical calculations, and the theory of music we have a long list, Asiatic and Spanish, with a concise notice of their lives and principal writings. The works of Ptolemy also exercised the ingenuity of the Arabians; while Alchindi, as far as we may be allowed to judge from his multifarious volumes, traversed the whole circle of the sublimer sciences. But judicial astrology, or the art of foretelling future events from the position and influences of the stars, was with them a favourite pursuit; and many of their philosophers, incited by various motives, dedicated all their labours to this futile but lucrative inquiry. They often speak with high commendation of the

* Bib. Arab. Hisp. t. I. p. 318—338.

† Ibid. p. 323.

APP. II. iatro-mathematical discipline, which could controul the disorders to which man was subject, and regulate the events of life.

The tenets of Islamism, which inculcate an unreserved submission to the over-ruling destinies of heaven, are, evidently, adverse to the lessons of astrology; but the terrors of superstition, the anxious fears which futurity generates, and the ascendency exercised by craft over the weakness of credulity, have, at all times, proved a more than equal match for plain sense and sober calculation. Nor, when we look into the histories of nations, even deemed enlightened, should we be justified in concluding, that the Arabians were but superficially instructed, because they listened to astrological predictions, and gave credit to the supposed efficacy of amulets and talismans.

From the Greeks, still in search of science, the Arabs turned their attention to the books of the sages, who are esteemed the primitive instructors of mankind, among whom Hermes was deemed the first. They mention the works written by him, or rather by *them*, as they suppose, after other authors, that there were three of the name. To one the imposing appellation of *Trismegistus* has been given; and the Arabians, from some ancient records, we may presume, minutely describe his character and person. They also published, as illustrative of their astrological discipline, some writings ascribed to the Persian Zoroaster, of whom they relate, that he foretold to his countrymen, that, in the latter days, a virgin would conceive a son, and that a star would appear at his birth. "And you, my children," he

added, "you, of all nations, will first perceive its rising, which, when you perceive, go whither it shall lead you, and offering to him your gifts, adore the child, for he is the *word* that made the heavens *." APP. II.

In their researches into the secrets of nature, we shall not be surprised to find the Arabians engaged in the wild speculations of alchemy, and busy in the pursuit of the philosopher's stone. All nations have pursued their way to improvement through these intellectual aberrations.

But however fondly they pursued these subjects, and others of a like character, the major part of the Arabic writings abound with sound and instructive learning, of which the Spaniards seem to have possessed an ample share. They repeated all that Archimedes and Apollonius Pergæus had taught, with many additional illustrations; and they translated and commented upon the Elements of Euclid, and every other work which had been famous in Greece. At the same time they were far from being deficient in original authors, of whom eighty-seven are mentioned as having distinguished themselves in the various branches of mathematics or astronomy. Even instruments, for the prosecution of the latter science, were invented or perfected by them †.

* The passage is from Abulpharagius (Dynast. Hist. p. 54.) an Arabian, indeed, but also a *christian*, who wrote in the thirteenth century.

† Bib. Arab. Hisp. t. 1. p. 339—444.

APP. III. Nor let me forget to mention, how much we are indebted to the Arabians for facilitating the knowledge and practice of arithmetic. The Romans were not great proficients in the science of numbers; and the Greeks themselves, though much more advanced, were not masters of the art, though it is probable, that their writings furnished the principles, on which the Arabians improved.

I pass over, as of little interest, the two hundred and sixty volumes on *Jurisprudence*, that is, on the laws civil and canonical; as likewise the many commentaries on, and illustrations of, the Text of the Koran*. On this extraordinary performance, as remarkable for its low and extravagant effusions, as for the simple truth and sublimity of many passages, I have not, I think, observed, that, in point of time, it is the first Arabian composition in prose of which we have any account. By whomever it was compiled, its incoherence and want of order clearly shew, that the presiding mind was actuated by a vivid and ardent imagination, uncontrouled by rules, and unacquainted with the severe canons of composition. In other words, the whole context of the Koran proves, that its author was a genuine Arabian. Still, the elegance and purity of its language, in the dialect of the tribe of Koreish, are universally admitted; and it is deemed the standard of the Arabic tongue, while the more orthodox maintain, that it cannot be imitated by any human pen. To

* See Sale's Prelim. Disc. p. 79.

this harmony of expression and easy flow of style, they, who know how to value the powerful efficacy of words, have sometimes ascribed the persuasive influence of the Koran upon the Asiatic mind, in spite of all its incredible absurdities.

Under the same head as above-mentioned, may, without hesitation, be also classed what are called *Dogmatical* and *Scholastic* works, though the titles of some, and the contents of others, may be deemed curious*. And from the whole of these multifarious inquiries, the truth of the general position is more confirmed, that the genius, as well as the language, of the Arabians was adapted to every subject.

Geography.

But of all subjects the most entertaining, Geography and History remain to be considered. The Arabian conquerors possessed many extensive and fertile regions of the earth, which resounded with the wars and achievements of their caliphs and generals. The first would lead to descriptions, from which Geography would take its rise; and the second would call up the genius of History. Hence, among their writers, we find some delineating the situation of lands, the climates of countries, the forms of cities, the characters and manners of people; whilst others are no less sedulously employed in recording the rise of kingdoms, the series of events, the administration of governments, the good and bad conduct

* Bib. Arab. Hisp. t. 1. p. 445—541.

APP. II. of rulers, and the lives of men, renowned for their virtue, their wisdom, or their learning.

Under the first head, we cannot but regret the paucity of volumes, which do not exceed seven, and which seems owing to the fatal accident, which has been mentioned. But some compensation is said to be made by their importance.

In the thirteenth century, Alcazuini, a Persian, published a work highly esteemed, entitled *The Wonders of Nations*, in which, having himself surveyed the greater part of Africa and Asia, he gives the names of countries, islands, cities, mountains, and rivers, with their situations, and descriptions: in which accuracy of delineation is said to vie with elegance of style. He then proceeds, in the same fulness of information, to describe the religion, the institutions, the manners, the governments, the arts, the trades and commerce, of each nation, introducing an account of the more rare vegetables, metals, gems, and fossils, with an account no less studiously laboured, of quadrupeds, birds, and fishes. What his own observation did not supply, he drew from the best records; so that the work may be considered as a repository not of geographical science only, but of natural and civil history*.

Of the other writers on geography, particular and general,

* A Latin Epitome of this valuable work, by Casiri, was ready for the press in 1770.

four are Spaniards, and of all it is observed, that they often create difficulties, by their manner of giving the names of towns and cities, so different from those used by the Greeks and Latins. Some of them also (which is no reproach to geographical authors) do little more than copy their predecessors in the same line, particularly the anonymous writer or writers of what is called the *Nubian Geography*, who are supposed to have copied and to have abridged, under this title, the greater work of Aldrisi. Aldrisi, of royal descent, wrote in the twelfth century*; and however valuable his work may be deemed, in the estimation of the learned, that of the Nubian abbreviator, more than once translated, has been much praised. His description of the world in general, and of Asia, Africa, and Spain, is said to merit high commendation, while the purity of his Arabic has never been surpassed.

I may here introduce some account of Leo Africanus, whom I have more than once quoted as the author of the *Lives of certain Arabian Philosophers*. He was a native of Granada, which he quitted in 1492, at the time of the capture of that city by Ferdinand, king of Arragon, and withdrew into Africa, whence came the name of Africanus. To this was afterward added that of Leo, when, after various peregrinations, on a visit to Rome, during the pontificate of the illustrious prelate who bore that name (Leo X.) he conformed to

* Aldrisi seems to have been the same person as Essachalli before mentioned.

APP. II.

the christian faith. He was much caressed by the pontiff; but he returned to Africa, where he again embraced the tenets of the Koran. He fixed his residence at Tunis, where he compiled his *Description of Africa*, a work which contains much curious matter, and which, I think, I have somewhere read, that he himself translated into Italian.

Though it is very foreign from my subject, I shall, I trust, be excused, if I briefly notice, that the mention of *gunpowder*, as in use among the Arabians, is introduced by the Egyptian geographer Ebn Fadhl, who lived about the middle of the thirteenth century. It is well known that the Greeks and Romans, made use of burning darts and other heated weapons which were thrown by machines or by the hand. Ebn Fadhl thus mentions the warlike instruments of his own time: "Bodies, in the form of scorpions, bound round and filled with nitrous powder, glide along, making a gentle noise; then exploding, they lighten, as it were, and burn. But there are others which, cast into the air, stretch along like a cloud, roaring horribly as thunder roars, and on all sides vomiting out flames, burst, burn, and reduce to cinders whatever comes in their way." Other accounts rather more recent, prove, that this tremendous powder, whether derived from the Chinese or Indians, was known to the Saracens, and used by them in their wars, long before the age of its supposed discovery in Europe.

It is with more pleasure that I notice the mention of the use of paper amongst the Arabians, as early as the eighth century. It was manufactured of linen or silk, and it is

presumed that they derived the art from the Persians or the more oriental Indians, who excelled in penmanship, and whose ink and other colours possessed a peculiar lustre*. APP. II.

The important article of History still remains: but before I speak more at length on the three eminent writers, best known in Europe by the names of Abulpharagius, Abulfeda, and Bohadin, I shall first review the contents of the hundred and seventy-seven volumes which close the labours of the Escurial librarian. History.

No subject, with which the arms or arts of the Arabian conquerors, through the whole extent of their various territories, were connected, and on which the pen of history could be employed, seems to have been left unnoticed by their writers. In India and in Persia, in Africa and in Spain, we find them indefatigable in collecting information, and, where their own researches failed, carefully transcribing from the works of others. It has been remarked, that the Spanish Arabians travelled much; and this circumstance, as it enlarged their sphere of knowledge, gave a peculiar variety and richness to their language. The learned are agreed in this favourable opinion of the Moorish dialect.

Abi Nassar, Abu Said, and Alnovairi, in different ages of the Hegira, and themselves from different countries, un-

* Bib. Arab. Hisp. t. II. p. 1—14.

APP. II. dertook to treat of *General History*; and the work of the last writer is peculiarly comprehensive. His researches are carried far back into antiquity, while, in more modern times, they descend from the kings of Persia, Alexander the Great, and the Ptolemies, his successors, the Assyrian and Roman emperors, and the events of Africa and the west, to our thirteenth century. This work of Alnovairi, in ten volumes, is much valued by the Arabians.—Under the same head may be classed many biographical works, particularly that of Ebn Khalcan, a Syrian, in the same century, who gives an account, in alphabetical order, of the lives of Mussulmans of every age and nation, illustrious in war or in peace, and distinguished by their literary attainments, or their civil virtues.

Whilst their attention was thus captivated by subjects, in some degree remote, Arabia, the common parent of all, was not likely to be neglected; and various are the volumes which minutely relate, or particularly describe, whatever belonged to its history, its antiquities, its inhabitants, its language, its soil, and its products. But this has already been sufficiently mentioned. Even horses had their genealogists and historians.

From Arabia, in the descriptions of which, Mecca, as may well be imagined, often detains the reader, we are carried by other writers into Persia, and even to Æthiopia. The celebrated Alsiuthi, an Egyptian, who has before been mentioned, in the long catalogue of his scientific writings, has a work of great elegance, entitled the *Æthiopic Triumph*, which gives the history of that degraded nation, and recounts the many

good qualities of which he deemed them possessed. He attempts also to investigate the cause of that colour, which has been the source of their misery, and states the opinions of other writers.

The same author, with a filial fondness, has illustrated the history of Egypt, the country of his nativity; and he mentions the names of fifty other writers who had treated the same subject. That primitive nursery of science could never want a champion to announce its praises; and as Cairo, which owed its foundation to the Saracens, was become the seat of government, and the Arabians were greatly indebted to the schools of Alexandria for the rich stores of Grecian literature, which they now possessed, gratitude as well as other motives, would naturally prompt them to make some return in the history of its present greatness, and the lives of its learned citizens.

The historians of the many states which stretch along the northern coast of Africa, particularly of the kingdom of Morocco, are numerous; in which I find the series of their princes, in various dynasties, detailed, the cities and manners of their inhabitants described, and not unfrequently the names and writings of their learned men enumerated. Fez was founded in the second, Morocco in the fifth century of the Hegira; of the splendour of which we have magnificent accounts. It seems certain, that many of their princes were great patrons of learning, of which we have some proof in the extensive libraries which they collected.

The history of the Caliphs was a favourite subject with the

APP. II.

Arabian writers *. In the praises of Mahomet they are never silent; and, it must be allowed, that his achievements, and those of the caliphs, his vicars and successors, were many of them sufficiently striking to awaken the feelings of the poet, and to swell the note of fame. I have besides, observed, that when there were no more kingdoms to conquer, or rather when their ambition was satiated, and Bagdad was founded, the new dynasty of the Abassides turned their thoughts to the more tranquil pursuits of science. "They could pass," says one of their historians, "the cheerful hours of leisure with men of learning and taste." And these men, or men like these, have been careful to record their generous patronage, and with a copious enumeration of the events of their reigns, to transmit an account of their domestic habits, of the virtues by which they were most characterized, and of the wise or agreeable sayings which fell from their lips. In these narrations, which are peculiarly their own, the beauty of the Arabic language is unrivalled.

But, certainly, it may be lamented, says Ockley, while they draw from many sources of science, that the Arabians did not learn the Greek language, and study Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, and other masters of correct writing whose works lay open before them. Then might we have expected a succession of such historians, as would have been worthy to record the actions which their heroes achieved. But to that object they never turned their thoughts, valuing no language, and no

* See Ockley's *History of the Saracens*, extracted from Arabian authors.

style of writing but their own. In the simplicity of their narrations, indeed, there is often great beauty, and the most prolix tales, though crowded with trifling incidents, delight by the dramatic interest that dialogue and repartée never fail to impart; but more than this, and more than the use of the most proper and significant words, is necessary to form a perfect writer. He must be patient in research, discriminating in the choice of materials, perspicuous in their arrangement.

We will pass into Spain.

Abu Baker Ebn Alabar, a Spanish Arabian, published a work in our thirteenth century, entitled the *Silken Garment*, which is highly praised by the critics. They say that its diction is peculiarly pure and appropriate, its style elegant, compressed, dignified, and interspersed with just observations. It treats of the kings of Spain and Mauritania, divided into seven centuries, and of the great men, generals, prefects, prætors, and ministers, who were famous for their writings. Of these he gives the lives and characters, the dignities to which they were raised, their fortunes and achievements, selecting passages from their compositions, as he proceeds, on which he comments with critical nicety. But from this splendid knot of worthies he carefully severs all those to whom literature owed no obligation, reserving their lives to be discussed separately, but in the same order of centuries, at the close of his work. The writer, whom I follow, confines his extracts chiefly to Spain.

In the second age of the Hegira (with which Alabar begins, because then the Spanish monarchy was first founded by Ab-

dalrahman), though this prince was himself a poet, and some of his successors, with their ministers, were famed for their various learning, the progress of science was often retarded by the unsettled state of the times. The third century (with us the ninth) opened with better omens. Abdalrahman, the second of the name, was on the throne of Corduba, a prince, who united military science with the love of letters, and whose graceful manners commanded the affections of his subjects. He was conspicuous for his firmness and his love of truth. He never violated his promises; and he considered every breach of truth as a crime. His wars were a series of victories. The generals, whom he employed, were signalized by prowess; his ministers by wisdom; while favours and attention attached men of science to his person. He paved Corduba with stones, and adorned it with many palaces; whilst he conducted water through leaden pipes into the city from the neighbouring hills. And what, in a literary history, is worthy of peculiar notice, he has himself recorded in elegant verse, these works, whether of peace or war. His three successors, the last of whom saw the century close, Almonderi excepted, trod in the steps of Abdalrahman. They were renowned for success in arms, for equal qualities of mind, and for an equal love of letters, which they also manifested by their literary compositions. And their courts and councils no less displayed a splendid succession of great men.

A third and the greatest of the Abdalrahmans was still to grace the Spanish throne. His reign began with the fourth century of the Hegira (the tenth of Christ), and was the most prosperous and of the longest duration which any Arabian prince had yet enjoyed. The factions, feuds, and civil wars

with which the country had often been harassed, were everywhere suppressed by his prudence and courage. Justice was impartially administered: the land was enriched by the blessings of peace; science and all its attendant pursuits, nourished by favours, and fostered by the example of the prince, were prosecuted with general enthusiasm. Three miles from Corduba, Abdalrahman constructed the city, palace, and gardens of Zehra in honour of his favourite Sultana. To this place his liberal taste invited the most skilful artists of the age; and the buildings were adorned by twelve hundred columns of Spanish and African, of Greek and Italian marble. The hall of audience was encrusted with gold and pearls, and a great basin in the centre was surrounded with curious and costly figures of birds and quadrupeds. The Harem of the prince, that is, his wives, concubines, and black eunuchs, amounted to six thousand, three hundred persons; and he was attended to the field by a guard of twelve thousand horse, whose belts and scymitars were studded with gold. Such was the magnificence of this Arabian monarch; but when a fatal malady had laid him on his couch, he thus addressed his attendants, and we may fancy that we once more hear the son of David speak: "I have now reigned," said Abdalrahman, "above fifty years in victory and peace, beloved by my subjects, dreaded by my enemies, and respected by my allies. Riches and honours, power and pleasure, have waited on my call, nor does any earthly blessing appear to have been wanting to my felicity. In this situation, I have diligently numbered the days of pure and genuine happiness which have fallen to my lot: They amount to *Fourteen*:— O man! place not thy confidence in this present world."

He was succeeded by his son Alhakem, who, with the sceptre, inherited the prosperity, the endowments, and the learning of his father. Every polite art, it is related, was familiar to him; and to these accomplishments he joined a profound knowledge of jurisprudence. He wrote notes on whatever he read, and the margins of the books which he had perused, were filled with his remarks. Still further anxious to diffuse the love of letters among his subjects, he allured many learned men from the East by the offer of great rewards; and his collection of books, which had been amassed at a great expense, exceeded all belief. Not less than six hundred thousand volumes were formed into a library, forty-four of which were employed in the mere catalogue. The academy of Corduba was founded under the auspices of Alhakem. Many colleges were erected and libraries were opened in other cities, while more than three hundred writers exercised their talents on various subjects of erudition.

This was the golden age of Arabian literature in Spain; and let it be remarked, that this age coincided with the most dark and slothful period of our European annals. The royal seat of Corduba, about this time, contained six hundred moschs, nine hundred baths, and two hundred thousand houses. The prince gave laws to eighty cities of the first, to three hundred of the second and third order; and the fertile banks of the Guadalquivir were adorned with twelve thousand villages and hamlets. There may be some oriental exaggeration in these accounts; but it is agreed, that the æra which they describe, was one of riches, of magnificence, and of intellectual cultivation. "It was the age," observes a ju-

dicious traveller *, "of Arabian gallantry and grandeur, which rendered the Moors of Spain superior to all their contemporaries in arts and arms, and made Corduba one of the most splendid cities of the world. Corduba was the centre of politeness, taste, and genius; tilts and tournaments, with other costly shews, were long the darling pastimes of a wealthy people. And this was the only kingdom in the West, where geometry, astronomy, and physic, were regularly studied and practised." He might have added every branch of polite literature to the list. Alhakem reigned fifteen years and five months.

From this time, factions again prevailed, though learned princes, and learned men, on all sides, present themselves to our observation. Early in the following century, the dynasty of the Ommiades was extinguished. They were succeeded by the Almoravides; but the revolution changed the face of the Arabian monarchy. The governors of the provinces, the ministers of state, the chief officers in the army, and the heads of the leading families raised themselves to be independent princes, so that there were soon almost as many kingdoms as towns. Corduba, Toledo, Seville, Jaen, Lisbon, Tortosa, Valentia, Murcia, Almeria, Granada, and the Balearick islands had their respective sovereigns. The Christian princes, who had retained possession of the northern provinces, from which they waged an unceasing war, availed themselves of these

* Swinburne's Travels, p. 280.

APP. II.

divisions to regain their lost territories; and they finally succeeded.

Mohamed Ben Abdalla, as late as the middle of our fourteenth century, in a work entitled the *Universal Library* (under which name many similar works were published), restricting his inquiries to Spain, gave an account of the lives and writings of such of the Moorish Spaniards as had attained any scientific celebrity, from the first establishment of the monarchy to his own time. Of this valuable work, which originally consisted of eleven parts, five only remain, and these are not perfect. But its imperfection enhances our admiration: for, if we were attentively to consider the list of the authors who are here recorded, their works in every department of polite literature, and the perturbed state of the various governments, and compare it with an equal period of the most enlightened and tranquil of modern times, with their authors and their works, I would not hesitate to say, that the decision must be in favour of Moorish Spain.

Three other works, on the same subject, and under the same title, but of a prior date, contribute still more to augment the number of learned Spaniards, and their mass of science; and the last subjoins a list of females celebrated in the annals of the same domestic literature. I will mention one, Aischah, of Corduba, who lived in our tenth century, a poet, whose talents and learning caused the bosoms of many princes to thrill with admiration and with love. Her compositions, in prose and in verse, which were recited in the academy of the royal city, were received with reiterated applause. She led a single life,

and left behind her, together with an extensive and well-selected library, many lasting monuments of her taste and learning.

But we must not so soon quit Mohamed Ben Abdalla. Among the various works which he published, one is entitled a *Specimen of the Full Moon*, that is, the *History of the Kingdom of Granada*, and I do not think that the reader will be displeased with some account of the contents. I must, however, first observe, what I ought, perhaps, to have noticed before, that the Arabians were singularly whimsical in the titles of their books, which, as the *Specimen of the Full Moon* announces, had not the most distant reference to the subject of the volume. Thus, not to go further than Abdalla himself, the *Chronology of the Caliphs and Kings of Spain and Africa*, he entitles, *The Silken Vest embroidered with the Needle: The Lives of eminent Men* is *Odoriferous Plants*; a treatise on *Constancy of mind* is *Proved Butter*; and *Refined Gold* is meant to denote a *choice of elegant phrases*. In these conceits there was, certainly, (to us) a want of taste; but fashion, or established usage must ever controul the free exercise of judgment.

Granada, and its territory was the last principality which remained in the hands of the Mahometans; under whose administration it enjoyed the greatest affluence and prosperity. Its agriculture had been brought to perfection; its revenues and circulation were immense; its public works magnificent; and its population incredible. Of the taste and munificence of its first rulers, the ruins of the palace of *Alhambra*, built in the midst of gardens of aromatic trees, with noble views over beautiful hills and fertile plains, are, to the present day, a

APP. II. splendid monument *. The Moors are said to offer up prayers, every Friday, for the recovery of this favourite city.

As I wish to convey some idea of the manner in which Abdalla wrote, I shall present a concise view of his *History*, and, as nearly as a translation at second hand will admit, in the words of the author.

"Since the annals of kings," says he in his preface, "hold out an example to rulers, and give a lesson to others, that, when they contemplate these monuments, they may learn, from the inconstancy of fortune, the instability of human concerns, and the terror of many misfortunes, not easily to forget God, I have, therefore, undertaken to write this *History*, and to bring past events to light, from the obscurity of those annals in which they lay, as it were, entombed. I shall relate, in their proper order, what were the boundaries of this kingdom, the seat of empire, and the noble transactions of its princes. I will next give an account of the generals who were famous by their birth and exploits; of the governors and ministers who then flourished; of the contemporary princes who then reigned; and of such other things as may seem worthy to be mentioned. If the reader find any thing good or deserving of praise, I have already gained my purpose and the reward of my labours, and that toward the praise and glory of God, under whose benevolent direction I now proceed to ar-

* For a description of these ruins, see the elegant plates given by Swinburne, (Travels through Spain, p. 171—188.)

range my materials in the following order. The first part treats of the city of Granada, the seat of empire, of which a short description is given: the second of its provinces and the places subject to it: the third, of the kings and princes who in it held command: the fourth, of the manners and qualities of its citizens: the fifth, of the series and achievements of its kings.

1.—" Granada, by foreigners called Garanata, that is, the colony of strangers, by us the Damascus of Spain, formerly belonged to the celebrated city of Albira, from which it was not remote. In the fourth age of the Hegira, (the eleventh century) having become the royal seat, it began to be very famous. By the mild temperature of the air and the qualities of the soil, it, certainly, is not unlike to Damascus. From Corduba, the first and ancient residence of our kings, which may heaven restore to us! It is ninety miles distant, between the east and south.

" Granada is the capital of the most maritime towns, the proud head of the kingdom, the noble emporium of merchants, the indulgent parent of sailors, the receptacle of strangers from all the quarters of the earth, the perpetual garden of fruits ever succeeding each other, the grateful tarrying-place of men, the public treasury, the city most renowned for its fields and bulwarks, the boundless sea of grain, and of most excellent legumes, and the fertile mine of silk and sugar. Not far removed, rises a mountain, called *Sierra*, noted for the whiteness of its snows, and the purity of its waters. To this add the salubrity of the air, the variety of plants, and of exquisite aromatics. Amongst its most rare gifts, this merits

APP. II.

the first place, that the fields are not void of corn, nor the meadows without verdure in any part of the year. The territory abounds in gold, silver, iron, lead, marcasites, and sapphire stones. Various herbs, the gentian and the spikenard grow on its mountains, and in its marshes. There likewise is found the berry which gives the scarlet die to silk, and of this commodity an abundance is collected for commercial traffic and domestic use. Even our silken stuffs, are esteemed far superior to those of Assyria, in softness, elegance, and lustre.

"As to the country, it is most delightful, emulating the fields of Damascus, and well-adapted by day or night, to the exercise of riding or walking. It naturally stretches into a plain, which is watered by brooks and rivers. Villages and gardens every-where present themselves, adorned with beautiful buildings, trees, and plants, while the hills and the mountains, which fill the space of forty miles, encompass the plain in the form almost of a semicircle. There, or nearly there, stands the proud Granada, which partly covers the ascending steeps, with its lofty suburbs resting on five hills, and in part, spreads into the wide plain, to a place called *Cor-Alnahl.* Words can, besides, but ill express, how happy, how enchanting it is rendered by the softness of the air, the mildness of the climate, the raised arches of its bridges, its convenient porticos, and its splendid temples. The river Darro, flowing from the east, then divides it, and joining the Singilis, flows through the plain, till, nourished by many copious streams, it swells like the Nile, and in a broad current advances to Hispalis (Seville.)

"With a still more delightful prospect, on the opposite side, rises, as it were, another city, which is called Alhambra, where the royal residence appears. Lofty towers, embattled citadels, gorgeous palaces, and other resplendent edifices, attract the sight, and fill the mind of the beholders with admiration. A vast mass of waters, whose murmuring noise, as they fall from many fountains, is heard at a distance, is here seen, irrigating the fields and meadows. Spacious gardens, in like manner, surround the outer walls of Granada, with trees in the form of hedges; yet so, that the elegant edifices are beheld like stars to sparkle through the leaves. No spot is without its orchards, its vineyards, and its gardens; and the wealth only of the most opulent princes can cope with the value of the fruits and vegetables, which are scattered in profusion over the widely extended plain. The annual revenue which is hence derived, is considerable; part of which flows into the royal coffers.

"The king has here his own grounds, which are rendered wonderfully pleasant by rows of trees and by a variety of shrubs. You behold towers rising with a comely aspect, a plain amply expanded, perennial waters flowing for the use of mills, and the convenience of bathing. The revenue, which is hence derived, serves to maintain the fortifications of the city. A circumference of twenty miles encloses these grounds, which are cultivated and embellished by many able labourers and well-chosen animals. Castles, offices, and sacred structures, every-where meet the eye; and to these decorations of the fields must be joined, what, in the mind of the husbandman,

APP. II.

merits the first place, the richness and fertility of the soil. Contiguous to these grounds lie many towns, noted for their population and their farms, of which some are devoted to tillage, and others to pasture. Then succeed villages, and hamlets, all teeming with people. These different places, which are fifty in number, contain more than three hundred colleges and temples; and a hundred and thirty water-mills are seen at work without the walls."

2d. The kingdom of Granada, he says, contained thirty-three regions, and he numbers the principal cities, giving a brief description of each: but the Arabian names are not easily deciphered. He himself aware of the confusion which time and other accidents had occasioned, concludes this part of his subject with the following reflections: "Of the regions, which I have mentioned, some, in the present age, retain the same names; others have changed them; others, in the lapse of time, as is the case in human concerns, have wholly slipped from the memories of men: for God alone is, in his own nature, immutable."

3d. In this part, the author barely enumerates the succession of kings, who, in their various dynasties, from the first foundation of the state, in the fourth century of the Hegira, held the sceptre down to his own time, when the family of Beni Nasser continued to occupy the throne. This, as I have observed, was in our fourteenth century.

4th. "The people of Granada are orthodox in their religious belief, and infected by no heresy. They are dutiful to their

king; patient of labour; and highly generous: handsome in their shape, the nose moderate, the countenance fair, the hair generally black, the stature as it ought to be. Their language, which is Arabic, is noted for its elegance, highly embellished, but rather diffuse. They are arrogant and opinionated in discussion and in argument. The greater part are foreigners by descent; chiefly from Barbary. Their dress somewhat approaches to the Persian, consisting of rich streaked silks, and the finest woollen or linen cloths, woven from the most delicate threads. In winter they wear an African, or rather a Tunisian, cloak; in summer, a tunic of white linen: so that, when seen in the temple, they appear like the vernal flowers which gaily deck the meads. APP. II.

"The daily food of the inhabitants is generally wheaten bread, and that of the best kind. The poor and the labourers have, sometimes in winter, recourse to that of excellent barley. Every sort of fruit is eaten, particularly grapes, of which the quantity is prodigious; besides which there is a vast abundance of dried fruits, which is never exhausted. Even ripe grapes are preserved, without decay, from season to season.

"The citizens enjoy their times of leisure, some retiring into the country at the season of the vintage, while others also withdraw to their farms, but with their arms and their servants, whence they make excursions, and harass the lands of their enemies.

"The ornamental dress which is worn by the ladies of high

APP. II. birth, as well as by those whom favour or station have raised to eminence, consists of a girdle, crural bands, a vail exquisitely wrought with the purest gold and silver, with various decorations for the feet. They display a great variety of precious stones and gems. They are comely in their persons, and of a middle stature. It is rare to see one that is tall. As they are delicate, they delight in long hair, of which they assiduously nourish the growth. Their teeth are beautifully white, and their breath is fragrant with odours. They are active in walking. Their perceptions are quick, and their discourse is enlivened by grace and pleasantry. But the ostentation of our modern women, and the love of dress and ornaments, have now proceeded to such a pitch, that their extravagance may be deemed almost insanity."

5th. In the last section of this brief and admirable narration, Ben Abdalla details the history of the reigning family, Beni Nasser. "The first prince of the dynasty was Mohamed, surnamed Algaleb Billa, who was born in the city of Arjona, belonging to the happy and fertile country of Corduba, where he received his education under celebrated masters. But, in early youth, as soon as he felt the blood move quickly in his veins, he was seized with a lust of power; and he began to meditate great designs. In the conduct of war, and in the duties of peace, he evinced admirable talents. To military experience he added ardent courage, and bodily strength. He was averse from idleness, and careless of his personal ease: negligent of his attire, and highly frugal in every respect: dexterous in the arts of war, and in making use of favourable opportunities. As a general, he was prompt in

action, and regardless of danger. The dignity of his countenance commanded respect no less than that of his station. In the choice of his wives, he consulted the majesty of the throne; he was attentive to the conveniences of his servants; and never showed himself oppressive in providing for the exigencies of government. The battles, which he fought in person, have been fully detailed by the historians. He was wrapped in an ordinary cloak; he walked about in greaves; and in the transaction of his own concerns was never sparing of toil.

"On a Friday of the year 629 (1229) he made a successful assault upon the city of Jaen, and soon afterwards took Granada. When he ascended the throne, it is related, that he supplied with the necessaries of life such of the inhabitants of the royal city, as were indigent, or old, or incapable of labour. For a short time he was master of Seville and of Corduba, as I have elsewhere more fully related. Possessed of Granada, he undertook to build the citadel, called Alhambra, to accomplish which he found himself necessitated to impose some burthens upon the people. He was himself present, and overlooked the work, after the completion of which, and the conveyance of copious streams of water to the place, he made it the royal residence. He next entered into an alliance with the neighbouring princes, after which wealth flowed in so fast, that the treasury was filled with gold, whilst the storehouses, adjoining to the citadel, abounded in corn, and every kind of pulse. He moreover strengthened the mountain with fortresses and garrisons, and encompassed it with a wall. He now happily enjoyed, what he had wisely planned and executed. Twice in the week, he admitted those

APP. II.

to his presence who had any complaints to make, or petitions to offer; and he was always easy of access to men of letters and to embassadors. In affairs of moment he took the advice, frequent meetings, of the leading men of the people, of the judges, and of others recommended by their station, and afterwards, having laid the same points before his ministers in secret council, he allowed each to proceed in his department, and committed the superintendence to some of his generals."

The author then gives the names and characters of the chief ministers, secretaries, and judges, who were employed under the government of Mohamed; and subjoins a short account of the princes who, at the same time, reigned in Africa, as likewise of the contemporary Christian kings in Spain. Mohomed died in the year 671 of the Hegira, after a reign of more than forty years. His body was laid in a silver coffin, and an epitaph in the usual style of Asiatic exuberance was inscribed upon his tomb. He was succeeded by his son Mohamed, the second of the name.

The character of this prince is delineated with the same force, and in colours as flattering as those with which that of the father is described. "In magnificence," says Abdalla, "in military skill, in indefatigable industry, in prudence, firmness, and long experience. he fairly surpassed all other kings. He rewarded the ministers of his court with honours, his generals with ample favours; and, uniting together many different people, he enriched the country by means of commerce. Let me add to this, the singular elegance of his person and manners, his policy, his munificence, and his pa-

tience. He was hardly raised to the throne when he yielded to the wishes of his nobles; seemed dexterously, and with consummate art, to humour the designs of his enemies; but he heaped favours on his friends. With these, and other qualifications, he displayed exquisite skill in beautiful penmanship; and his poetical compositions were replete with point and fancy. Studious of literary lore, he took singular delight in the conversation of physicians, astronomers, philosophers, orators, and poets. Great differences having arisen in the beginning of his reign, which, to the imminent danger of the whole country, was fomented by an infamous band of partisans, Mohamed, at once forbearing and firm, never evinced any vacillation; he overcame the most refractory by endurance; and conciliated his enemies. He waged many wars with success; and died, after a long reign, with the renown of a celebrated name, both far and near."

The same order, which I have already described, is next pursued, and some events of the reign are detailed, on which I need not dwell. But I will remark, that the characters of not a few of the persons about the court, military, literary, and civil, were highly meritorious. Mohamed died in 701 (1301).

Mohamed III. his son and successor, trod in his father's steps, in whose school he had learned wisdom, and the art of government. "Occupied with the weighty cares of the state, and the exigencies of a perilous crisis, he often watched to a late hour, by light of torches, ruminating on the commonwealth, and the concerns of the royal house, while some persons were in waiting, who noted the passing hours.

APP. II. But this occasioned a disorder in his eyes. Fortune, however, was propitious, and his undertakings proved successful: he vanquished his enemies, and made peace with the kings. He was a poet and an orator; so great a poet, that he proposed many subjects of composition to others; and contended with them in alternate verses. Men of learning were his intimate acquaintance; and enjoyed his high regard. As the consummation of his general character, let me not omit his uncommon stock of knowledge, the readiness of his wit, his skill in composition, and the elegance of his handwriting. Truly he would have been a great king; but by nature he was cruel.

"Among the magnificent monuments which he left to posterity is the great Temple, of an exquisite form, which he erected in the royal city (called Alhambra), wrought in tesselated or mosaic work, and raised on columns elaborately finished, the capitals and bases of which are silver. This temple he piously endowed with the rents arising from a bath, which he built, on the opposite side, out of the tribute which was paid by the Jews and Christians; and he devised to it lands with their produce. The whole was a work worthy of so incomparable a prince."

This prince, however, was dethroned by his brother, Aba Algeiusch, of whom the historian speaks in equal terms of praise, extolling the beauty of his person, the virtues of his heart, and the accomplishments of his mind. Addicted to astronomical and mathematical pursuits, he excelled not only in the theory of these studies, but in the construction of instruments, and the arrangements of scientific tables. But his

reign was not prosperous; and he was himself expelled from the throne, by the machinations of his prime minister. His cousin Abu Said, the Prince of Malaca, succeeded him about the year of the Hegira 712.

Abu Said, better known by the name of Abulualid, besides many exquisite endowments, natural and acquired, was remarkable for his chastity, (a virtue of which we seldom read among the followers of Mahomet): "and with such ardour did he pursue the example of the greatest princes, that he seemed to live only for glory He excelled in the exercises of the chase, in the use of arms, and in the management of the horse. Aided by his friends, and favoured by many fortunate incidents, he commenced a glorious reign, governing his kingdom with justice, and making an irresistible opposition to the attacks and fury of his own enemies and of those of God. Such was his conduct, that he was esteemed the jewel, as it were, of his family, and the ornament of the age." When, on some occasion, the conversation turned on the principles of religion: "My principles," observed Abulualid, "are faith in one God, and in this"—laying his hand on his scymetar. The historian dwells on the many battles which he fought, some of which he describes with peculiar animation, and he speaks of the explosions by gunpowder which I before mentioned: "A fiery globe, by the means of combustible matter, with a mighty noise, suddenly emitted, strikes with the force of lightning, and shakes the citadel." He was assassinated by a relation whom he had offended, in the year of the Hegira 725, and was buried in the gardens of the Alhambra, "in a monument of elaborate workmanship."

APP. II.

His son, another Mohamed, succeeded to the throne of Granada. Of this prince, and of his two successors, the historian Abdalla was the contemporary, and as he occupied an important post in the court, was an eyewitness of the events of their reigns. His delineation of characters is, in general, flattering. This Mohamed he represents as a prince who was not inferior in mental qualifications to any of his predecessors, and was besides gifted with an uncommon degree of physical strength, and highly skilled in horsemanship. "In hunting," says he, "he took singular delight: he was versed in the knowledge of the best breed of horses: and he was warmly attached to the charms of poetry, and the beauties of eloquence. In besieging a Spanish city, when he had rashly advanced before his men, and thrown at a Christian a spear, richly ornamented with jewels, with which the wounded soldier was endeavouring to escape: "Let him go," exclaimed Mohamed to his followers who wished to save the weapon, "if he survive the blow, the spear will pay the expences of his cure." In attempting to carry war into Africa he was cut off, and slain, in the 733d year of the Hegira, and was succeeded by his brother.

Joseph was the brother's name, "a youth who might be deemed the glory of princes, celebrated for beauty of person, for strength, and for manners. He excelled in poetry. Remarkable for a dark and flowing beard, in conversation he was solemn, but gracious, and with a royal deportment. Affable to all, he received those who approached him, with kindness, and with an attention proportioned to their station. His wit was keen; and his memory, richly stored with quotations, added weight to his remarks. His mental endowments

were heightened by skill in the mechanic arts. Studious of peace, he ruled with much forbearance; was often employed in raising public edifices; and, whilst he seemed to emulate the renown of other princes, he surpassed them in wealth and other valuable acquisitions." Thus, revered by his subjects, and often giving aid to the cause of Islamism, Joseph reigned during twenty and two years, when he fell by the dagger of an assassin, while, "on his knees in the temple, he was imploring the pardon of his sins, and striving to approach nearer to God by prayer." APP. IV.

The character of his son Mohamed, who was now raised to the throne, is thus delineated: "The virtues which were found dispersed in other princes, were combined in him—humanity, probity, composure of mind, and a candour announced in the features of his countenance. Called to the throne in his youthful years, he laboured to supply the defect of experience by the vigour of his exertions. We contemplated in him much gravity, prudence, modesty, temperance, and such lenity and gentleness of character, that he often lamented with tears the fate of the unhappy, and by love and favours strongly attached the affections of his friends. The inheritance which he received was not disturbed by ambition: security every-where prevailed. Luxury and adulation during his reign were banished from the court; and hence the people, softened by his manners, became themselves more gentle. The nobles cheerfully obeyed, and all were busy in proclaiming his praise. But fortune soon turned against him." His brother Ismael expelled him from the throne, which he held in spite of every effort used by Mohamed, who was powerfully aided

APP. II. by the Moorish prince of Fez and the Christian king of Castile. He was finally murdered by his cousin Abu Said, who himself dared to assume the purple, but who, detested for his crimes, and retreating to the court of the Castilian prince, experienced the fate due to treason. Mohamed once more entered the royal city of Granada, where he continued to reign in the year of the Hegira 765, of our era 1387, when Ben Abdalla closed his *Specimen of the Full Moon*, that is, the *History of the Kingdom of Granada.*

From this review of the work of Abdalla, which is itself an epitome, it may be collected, as far as we can rely on the fidelity of the translator, in what manner Arabian history was sometimes composed. But I suspect, that too great a liberty has been taken, and that a character which is not its own, but derived from a better source, has been engrafted on the Moorish stock: that where, as in other genuine compositions, a desultory negligence prevailed, a more compressed precision has been introduced; that trifling anecdotes and tiresome digressions have been omitted; and that minute and prolix details, in order to shew the copiousness of language and variety of expression, have been curtailed, or condensed into a less tedious series. Still, notwithstanding these defects which are charged on the Arabian writers, it must be owned, that, in their artless and dramatic narrations, and especially in the delineations of character, there is often something which powerfully arrests, and interests attention*.

* See Ockley's *History of the Saracens*, passim, wherein will be found an

The Fall of Granada, the last Moorish Settlement.

From the time at which the history of Abdalla closes, the end of the fourteenth century, when every other portion of the Moorish empire had been gradually recovered, the kingdom of Granada singly maintained its independence a hundred years. It was still extensive, comprising a compass of seven hundred miles, and still powerful from an immense population, diffused over its surface, and collected within the walls of fourteen cities, and ninety-seven towns. But internal discord, and the ambitious views of the chiefs, often broke the union which should now more than ever have strengthened the Moorish ranks. They neglected to preserve a friendly connexion with their countrymen in Africa, from whom they might have derived aid; and the arts which they cultivated, and the luxury consequent on the prosperity which has been described, had greatly relaxed the force of their military institutions, and abated their martial enterprise. On the other side, the Christian states, no longer subdivided into small principalities, the head of each of which assumed the ensigns of royalty, but formed into two powerful kingdoms under the crowns of Castile and Aragon, pressed forward with united strength, actuated by zeal for religion, by the desire of vengeance, and by the hope of rescuing their country from the reproach of seven hundred years of subjugation. The Moors, who were still a gallant people, and possessed of great resources, made head against their enemies, though town after town was taken; and sometimes defeated them even in

interesting account of Mahomet and the first Caliphs, drawn, in their own simple style, from the original authors.

APP. II. pitched battles. But when the two crowns just mentioned were, by a fortunate marriage, united in Ferdinand and Isabella, the last war with Granada began, which, in 1492, terminated in the capture of the city, and the utter overthrow of the Moorish power*.

And of the Caliphate.

Centuries before this event, the caliphs of Bagdad, whose splendour and love of letters we admired, had lost their greatness. I mentioned the principal causes which led to this catastrophe; and I observed, that, early in the tenth century, Radhi, the twentieth caliph of the Abbassides, was the last who could be said to enjoy the real dignity of the station. After him their temporal authority was more and more abridged, till, being obliged to seek an asylum in Egypt, the last eighteen of the dynasty, who were still acknowledged to possess some spiritual jurisdiction, were reduced to a state of dependence, and sometimes even of mendicity. "These lords of the Eastern world," says the historian Abulfeda †, "were brought down to the most abject misery, and exposed to the insults of a servile condition." Their territories most to the East had been dismembered, and formed into independent states, in the Arabian Irak, in Aderbigan or Media, in Fars or Persia, and in Laristan or the country on the Persian gulph, whilst a like fate menaced and soon oppressed, the remaining territories. The inundation of northern barbarians, which overturned the empire of the West had also greatly contributed to accelerate the fall of the caliphate. The Turks, from the

* Mariana Hist. of Spain, passim. † Annal. Moslem. p. 261.

neighbourhood of mount Taurus, had been first called in as auxiliaries; but as they extended their conquests, these lieutenants, as they humbly styled themselves, of the vicars of the prophet, soon became their masters. Then also happened, what had happened to us. Like the Goths and other northern tribes, the Turks, ignorant of letters, intent on conquest, despised what they could not understand, dissipated whatever monuments of science or of taste the Almanzors and Almamons had collected, discouraged every liberal pursuit, and, breathing the genuine spirit of the Caliph Omar when he commanded the Alexandrian library to be consumed, laid the foundations of the most permanent mental slavery by which the human race had ever been oppressed*.

The three Arabian Historians

I must now briefly speak of the three Arabian historians, with whom, I said, that Europe was best acquainted, and who, giving the outlines of great enterprises, and pourtraying manners and characters, widely differing from our own, may be perused with pleasure even under the disadvantages of a translation. Of the three, Bohadin

* Yet D'Herbelot (Bib. Orient. art. Elm.) speaks better of the Turks: I admit, he says, at the time of their first conquests in Europe, that they were principally addicted to martial exercises; but they soon became a highly polished people. They took not, indeed, the Greeks, whom they had subdued, for their masters, as did the Romans and Saracens; but under the latter they studied, and they translated their principal works. Among their sultauns many were learned; and it may be remarked, that they never build a mosque without djoining to it a college.

APP. II. is the first in point of time, as he flourished in the twelfth century. He was contemporary with the celebrated Saladin, the *History* of whose life he wrote, particularly that portion of it, which was connected with the third crusade, and his capture of Jerusalem. As Bohadin was an eyewitness of many events which he relates, and personally acquainted with the Sultaun, by whom he was employed in high offices, his narrative is peculiarly interesting. He attended his master through the most active period of his life, was with him in his last sickness, and a witness of his death. The portrait which he draws of his justice and affability, his severity and clemency, exemplified in appropriate anecdotes, gives us the striking picture of an Eastern hero, the truth of which contemporary Latin writers are compelled reluctantly to own. He informs us, that in his conversation, Saladin was singularly elegant and pleasing; that he was accurately acquainted with the history of the several Arabian tribes, their rites, and customs; that he also knew the genealogies of their horses; that he was not ignorant of what was curious and rare in other countries; that he was particularly attentive in his inquiries about the health of his friends, their illness, their medicines, and other circumstances; that his discourse was free from all obscenity and scandal; and that he was peculiarly compassionate and kind to orphans and to persons advanced in years. What would be our estimate of the intellectual accomplishments and moral qualities of the Christian hero Richard, if we placed them in the opposite scale? But I do not know, that he appears any where to greater advantage than in the pages of Bohadin, who could be just, even to an adversary. The historian admits that he was uncommonly

active; of great spirit and firm resolution; and had been signalized by his militaryachievements and his constant intrepidity. He says that he was less esteemed by those whom he led, than the King of France (Philip Augustus) on account of his kingdom and dignity, but more abundant in riches, and more illustrous for military valour*.

Abul Farai, by us called Abulpharagius, a native of Armenia, a christian and a physician, lived in the thirteenth century. He is best known by an *Abridgment of Universal History*, divided into ten parts or dynasties, from the earliest times down to his own. The two last dynasties, which treat of Mahomet and the caliphs, of the Mongul Tartars, and the victories of Jingez Chan, are esteemed the most correct, and far the most interesting in point of information. But what may interest us most, and what seems to form the chief merit even of the latter dynasties, is the account which he gives of the state of learning under the caliphs, and the many anecdotes with which he intersperses it of philosophers, physicians, and celebrated men. To this account I have not been inattentive. Notwithstanding his religious profession, Abul Farai was much followed by the Moslems, as a teacher in the various branches of science, as well as in medicine; and the inflated diction, in which they speak of his mental endowments and powers, is truly Arabian. He was the prince, they say, of sages, the most excellent of the excel-

* The *History* of Bohadin in Arabic and Latin was published by Schultens, at Leyden, in 1755.

APP. II. lent, the model of his times, the glory and phœnix of the age *.

The last of this triumvirate is Ismael Abulfeda, a Syrian prince, in the fourteenth century, the author of a work on *Geography*, and of a *General History*. Of this history, as was said of that of Abul Farai, the most detailed and amusing portion is the narrative of Mahomet and his successors, which is also enriched with anecdotes on learning and learned men. These Arabian historians have been said, from this consideration, to bear some resemblance to the Grecian Plutarch; but here the resemblance must cease. An account of the *Life* of Saladin, from whom Abulfeda is said to have descended, forms the last portion of his *history* †.

Conclusion. I could now proceed‡ to enlarge this sketch of Arabian

---

* A Fine edition of this author, in Arabic and Latin, was given by the learned Pococke, in 1663, 2 vols. in 4to.

† The *Geography* of Abulfeda, and different parts of his *history* have been separately published, at different times: the first, as it relates to Mahomet, by Gagnier in 1723: the second, which includes the history of the Arabians and their caliphs from the first year of the Hegira 622 to 1015, in 1754, by Reiske: the third, on the *Life* of Saladin, by Schultens in 1755, who subjoined it to the work of Bohadin.

‡ The Bibliotheque Orientale of D'Herbelot, which lies before me, is a rich repository of Arabian knowledge. His principal guide in history is Khondemir, a Persian, who lived as late as the fifteenth century, who seems to have compiled his work, from the creation of the world to his own time, from authentic sources, with singular precision, and attention to order.

literature with much additional matter; but I presume, that enough has been said to convey some idea to the reader on the subject, and at least enough to answer the distinct object which I had in view. And, I hope, that he who peruses these pages will not fail to keep in mind, that while he admires at Bagdad, at Cairo, at Fez or at Corduba, the laudable exertion of talents and the display of taste, a mental lethargy, is in the meantime oppressing all the kingdoms of Europe; or that if some literary efforts were occasionally made, they served only to betray the obliquities of reason, and a general absence of critical discernment. The golden age of Arabia was the leaden age of Europe.

Yet I am inclined to think, that Oriental literature, though compared with ours, during the same period, it bore a high value, has experienced too much prodigality of praise. What is understood by few, is usually magnified beyond its proper dimensions by vanity, or by ignorance. An able critic* remarks, that from our education in the Greek and Latin schools, we have fixed in our minds, a standard of exclusive taste; and when to this standard we bring the poetry of the East, its history or its other literary productions, we feel, and are ready to pronounce a peremptory decision. Yet, continues the same writer, we should not be forward to condemn the literature and judgment of nations, of whose language we are

* The Decline and Fall of the Rom. Emp. vol. v. p. 430. Mr. Gibbon, as an historian, has many equals; as a critic, has no superiors.

APP. II. ignorant. I will add, that their manners, sentiments, and habits widely differed from our own. But in these respects, did not the ancient Greeks and Romans differ from us? and yet we admire their compositions as excellent, and even those who read them only in translations, are disposed to admit them as models of taste. Nature, though various, is everywhere simple. The gradations of character are uniform; the rule of right and wrong is not affected by climate; virtue is universally deemed amiable, and vice odious. The perceptions of mind are analogous to these; and when mental perceptions are described in words, in order to be true, they must be an accurate transcript.

Our classics, it is added, had much to teach, and the Arabians had much to learn. They had to learn, the temperate dignity of style, the graceful proportions of art, the forms of visible and intellectual beauty, the just delineation of character and passion, the rhetoric of narrative and argument, the regular fabric of epic and dramatic poetry. But confident in the riches of their native tongue, they disdained the study of any foreign idiom, were satisfied with translations, often crude and imperfect, and disregarding, chiefly on account of their mythology, the classical beauties of the Grecian school, sought improvement only in the graver and more abstruse departments of science.—They held no intercourse with us, or with our genuine guides in literature, the poets, the orators, and the historians of ancient Rome; and it is probable, that they formed their opinion of what we were, from the living samples which were too often presented to their view. This we may forgive; and let us be just:—The Arabians kept the

The Author not having been able to attend himself to the Press, begs the Reader's indulgence to the following

ERRATA.

Page 3, Note, *read cultus.*
8, line 10, *for* they, *read* the Romans.
12, Note, *read* scriptores.
25, Note, *for* copies, *read* editions.
27, line 5, *for* Lœ, *read* La.
33, Note, *read dulcedine.*
38, line 23, *dele* that.
42, — 28, *read* abatement.
49, — 2, *after* masters, *read* and.
50, — 24, *for* perceiving, *read* perusing.
63, Note, *read* Trojæ.
81, line 6, *dele* ".
88, — 13, *read* Platonists.
89, — 16, *read* Nazianzum.
95, — 11, 12, *dele* " ".
103, — 5, *read* divine.
103, — 24, *dele* he.
104, — 10, *dele* , at.
109, — 8, *for* have, *read* has.
129, — 15, *read* German.
137, — 19, *read* Banchor.
146, — 17, *read* adapt.
148, — 5, *for* ascendant. Logic, *read* ascendant, logic,

Page 155, line 22, *for* exthuire, *read* temporal.
241, — 11, *read* idolaters.
240, — 15, 25, *read* Bec.
277, — 8, *for* to, *read* in.
284, — 18, *for* dirt, *read* act.
290, — 18, *dele* that.
290, — 16, *after* fathers, *put* —it.
333, — 8, *after* islands, *put* ,
350, — 4, *for* most, *read* more.
366, — 29, *read* Joinville.
413, — 13, *read* constitutes.
444, — 2, *read* Vienne.
499, — 18, *for* all in hands, *read* in the hands of all.
503, — 1, *for* has, *read* had.
511, — 1, *for* recollect, *read* reflect.
530, — 5, *dele* it seemed to me, that.
535, — 2, *read* Eutiches.
583, — 11, *for* rapacious, *read* capacious.
611, — 4, *read* countrymen.
645, — 11, *for* of, *read* in.
694, — 24, *for* toward, *read* to.
705, — 18, *for* it, *read* it.
713, — 21, *after* experience, *dele* .

lamp of science burning during the obscure period which we have traversed; and their example contributed to stimulate not a few, even among ourselves, to intellectual pursuits; whilst they saved in their versions some treatises from oblivion, which can now no longer be found in the original. APP. II.

THE END.

J. GILBARNARD,
Skinner Street, London.

WORKS

LATELY PUBLISHED BY J. MAWMAN, 39, LUDGATE STREET.

Elegantly printed in Two large Volumes 4to. illustrated with Eight engraved Plans of Churches, Price Five Guineas in Boards,

1. A TOUR THROUGH ITALY, exhibiting a View of its Scenery, its numerous Antiquities, and its Monuments; particularly as they are Objects of CLASSICAL INTEREST and ELUCIDATION; with an Account of the present State of its Cities and Towns, and occasional Observations on the recent Spoliations of the French.

By the Rev. JOHN CHETWODE EUSTACE.

"Hæc est Italia diis sacra, hæ gentes ejus, hæc oppida populorum."—Plin. Nat. Hist. iii. 20

This Work is the result of much Research and Observation. It exhibits a comprehensive View of modern Italy, with its varied Beauties of Natural Scenery, and its numerous Works of Art. The gratification of the Scholar and the Man of Taste is consulted by a constant Reference to the Writers of Antiquity; and it is confidently presumed, that some new Light will be thrown upon the Language, Literature, Politics, and Character of the Italians.

2. T. LIVII PATAVINI HISTORIARUM ab urbe condita Libri qui supersunt XXXV. recensuit et Notis ad usum Scholarum accommodatis illustravit J. B. L. Crevier, Emeritus Rhetoricæ Professor in Collegio Dormano Bellovaco Universitatis Parisiensis. 6 Tom. 8vo. £2 2s. Boards. Oxon. 1813. The same Book printed on royal Paper, £3 3s. Boards.

"Livius Optimus Historicus."—Bacon 8vo. edit. vol. 7. p. 65.

"Crevier's Livy," says Gibbon, "contains a sensible Life of the Historian, a judicious selection of the best remarks on his work, and displays as much intelligence as taste on the part of the Editor."—Ernesti speaks not less favourably of Crevier's Notes.

The Neatness, Cheapness, and Correctness of this Edition, will, it is hoped, give it a Claim to the attention of Scholars.

3. RICARDI PORSONI ADVERSARIA.—Notæ et Emendationes in Poetas Græcos, quas ex Schedis Manuscriptis Porsoni apud Collegium SS. Trinitatis Cantabrigiæ adversatis deprompserunt et ordinarunt nec non Indicibus instruxerunt Jacobus Henricus Monk, A. M. Carolus Jacobus Blomfield, A. M. Cantabrigiæ: Sumptibus Collegii SS. Trinitatis. Excudit Joannes Smith, Academiæ Typographus, 1812. In One Volume demy 8vo. ornamented with a fine Portrait of the Author, engraved by Fittler, from a Bust taken immediately after his death, £1 5s. Boards. A few Copies beautifully printed on imperial paper, and hot-pressed, with Proof Impressions of the Head, £3 3s. Boards.

"If the value of a book is to be estimated by the merit of its contents, it is impossible to complain of dearness in the present instance. The matter in Porson's Criticisms is exceedingly condensed. Had the remarks and emendations here published been written by Porson at the same length as the elegant and chastised Preface to the Hecuba, they would have occupied at least five times their present space; and had the publication of such a multitude of critical dainties been entrusted to any of our German brethren, they would probably have been diffused through many full grown volumes, to the great delight of all lovers of bulky literature."—Mus. Crit. p. 119.

00066623

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 21 October, 2015